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1867

THE AFTERGLOW: SONGS AND SONNETS

FOR MY FRIENDS.

“POETRY TAKES ITS ORIGIN FROM EMOTION
COLLECTED IN TRANQUILLITY.”—*Wordsworth*.

LONDON;
MITH, ELDER & CO., 65, CORNHILL.
1867.



PR
4161
B26a

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ERRATA.

Page 72, line 21, for "case" read "care."

„ 97, „ 7, for "halcyon" read "alcyon."

„ 126, „ 12, for "dross" read "draff."

THE AFTERGLOW:

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

1.

PREFACE TO MY FRIENDS.

SIDE by side within this cover,
Shrinking from oblivion's rage,
Travel youth, and priest, and lover,
Would-be wit, and stammering sage.

What the issue of their roving
Neither you nor I may tell;
I the parent, you the loving
Friends who wish my wanderers well.

Tho' they dare not hope caressing
Where so many slighted pine,
Yet the odour of your blessing
Heartens them like holy wine.

The Afterglow:

So they start, their changes ringing,
This assurance stifling fear,
That no dull or harmful singing
E'er had won your smile or tear.

II.

REASONS FOR WRITING VERSES.

I SING because I love to sing,
Because instinctive fancies move ;
Because it hurts no earthly thing,
Because it pleases some I love.

Because it cheats night's weary hours,
Because it cheers the brightest day,
Because, like prayer and light and flowers,
It helps me on my heavenly way.

Because with peals of happy words
I would exorcise morbid care ;
Because a touch of deeper chords
May tune a heart to love and prayer.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

Because all sounds of human fate
 Within my heart an echo find ;
Because whate'er is good or great
 Lets loose the music of my mind.

Because above the changing skies
 The Spirit saith good angels sing ;
Because wherever sunshine lies
 The woods and waves with music ring.

Because amid earth's Babel noise
 All happy things that go or come
Give to their grateful hearts a voice ;
 Then why should I alone be dumb ?

III.

THE POET REQUIRES SYMPATHY.

THE poet, like the timid snail,
 Puts forth a feeling horn ;
And if of sympathy he fail,
 Of his desire forlorn,
 He shrinks all chill and shorn
 Into his solitary cell,
 There with silent thought to dwell.

The Afterglow :

But the kind touch of sympathy
The hidden life out calls,
Alike beneath the low roof-tree,
Or within tapestried walls,
Or by delicious waterfalls.

The snail transformed, on eagle's wings
Soars to the heavenly source of things ;

Then comes soul-laden with pure fire,
And scatters tuneful joy :
All hearts leap upward to the lyre ;
Forgotten all annoy,
Matron and maid, and sage and boy—
Fresh flowers of sympathy each brings,
And crowned with these the poet sings.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

IV.

THE POET.

HE sings his thought to music of sweet words ;
Thought overflowing from the inner well,
Where spring-like the emotions ebb and swell
As memory touches her mysterious chords.
Oh then, as one from many-coloured hoards,
He for delight selects a fitting spell ;
Listen with patient ear, for it may tell
Some unsuspected joy which life affords.
Student he is, with a discernment quick
Of soul and substance, and of all quaint hues
Which nature overlie ; 'tis his to seek
Truth's fairest flowers, and what men oft
refuse
So lovingly he twines, now bold, now meek,
'That many turn to hearken and to muse.

The Afterglow:

V.

“He that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast.”—
Proverbs xv. 15.

ALAS for me! I ne'er was wise,
And age hath scarcely worn me old,
Such visions danced before my eyes,
And everything that gleamed was gold.

And now that nearly sixty years
Have left me somewhat weak and chill,
I cannot drown my heart in tears :
It floats above them singing still.

I love the world, tho' not the same
That recreant Demas loved of yore ;
I love God's world, and in His Name
I love it ever more and more.

It paints in types of many a hue,
It sings in strains of many a tone,
That glory which our hopes pursue
Up to the Maker's mercy-throne.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

I love the present's steady glow,
And laughing dreams from out the past,
Where childhood's tangled wild flowers grow,
And o'er me still their fragrance cast.

I love the young, and bright, and nice ;
I love the gracious, old, and sage ;
I love the sun, and love the ice,
And every print on Nature's page.

And I have loved on misty morns
Thro' chill November's fog to thrust,
'Mid crashing woods and echoing horns,
To join the hounds' melodious burst.

And I have loved the midnight sea
When clouds were torn and waves ran wild,
While o'er the scudding vessel's lee
The eastern moon rose large and mild.

I love to watch the pale eclipse ;
Or when the sultry nights let fly
From the horizon's gasping lips
The fiery laughers of the sky.

I love the dark storm-shattered glen,
With all its torrent's roaring race ;
I love the rounding wolds and fen,
Where miles of shade the sunshine chase.

The Afterglow :

And I have loved the desert too,
 Time tracking to his sandy lair,
If haply countless years ago
 He dropt a tomb or temple there.

I love a thousand other things
 Would weary your kind heart to hear ;
I love to think that angels' wings
 Shall waft us to a lovelier sphere.

I love to muse on that calm stream
 Too wide for earthly woes to pass,
Upon whose banks the portals gleam
 Of joy-reflecting chrysopras.

For there I know is treasured up
 In what men call the realms above
The new wine in the Saviour's cup,
 The life of everlasting love.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

VI.

SINGING PRAYER.

To help the mind's unstable weakness
In many a mood I seek to pray,
And for the moment, risking meekness,
I strive to sing what others say.

In timid strain up flow the praises,
Yet sometimes with spontaneous start,
Christ's wondrous love a fountain raises
Within the garden of my heart.

Oh then to heaven bright jets it flingeth,
And where these fall on thoughts of earth
A grace the slender music bringeth,
And faith's inspiring flowers have birth.

These freshen all around with gladness,
For each reflects the joy above,
And lighting on some shadowy sadness,
Transforms its gloom to sparkling love.

Then sing, sing on, my heart's bright fountain !
The flowers of life grow weak and pale.
Rest not : thy source is in the mountain,
Whose living waters never fail.

The Afterglow:

VII.

THE FLESH.

DESPISE not thy humanity,
God's scheme of flesh and blood ;
Thy Saviour bore its load for thee,
How can it not be good ?

Bestowed by an omniscient power,
Blest with baptismal dew,
Why scorn this complex wondrous flower,
Because its days are few ?

And if the Master called it weak,
'Twas that the heart might feel,
And watch and pray, and muse and speak
All things that work its weal.

'Twas that amid the spray and din
Of life's tumultuous tide,
The Holy Spirit shrined within,
Should be the light and guide.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

And if the heart her strength and fires
From this pure fountain draw,
No tyranny the flesh requires,
But just a loving law.

Thou canst, 'tis true, its worth alloy
By lusting and excess,
As routing swine in greed destroy
The lily's loveliness.

Oh guard and tend with holy fear
This offshoot of Christ's vine ;
Briefer its charm but not less dear
Than other gifts divine.

The Afterglow :

VIII.

CONSOLATION AT NIGHT.

ANTEPAST of deep delight !

Heavenward aspiration !

These are stars which cheer the night
Of humiliation.

Hope, the moon full-orbed and near,

Not a vapour screening ;

Faith, the changeful atmosphere,
Ever intervening.

O ye stars, how far and frail

Is your saintly shining,

Thro' this faith's uncertain veil,
Rising and declining !

Yet your radiance sheds the grace,

Of a doom decided,

Of the rapture to embrace
Love for years divided.

Broader now the moonbeans fall,

Each star flashes clearer ;

And the glory of it all
Nearer gleams and nearer.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

IX.

A CALM SOFT NIGHT.

To the depths of the world the winds have hurled
The storm and his cloudy car,
And night hath spread her tent overhead,
On the beams of many a star.

The taskmaster sun in the west so dun
Lays low his scourging ray ;
And sweet things without number rejoice in his
slumber,
Aweary of toiling day.

The moon's soft lamp shows nor rout nor tramp.
Yet a mighty feast is laid
On tree and flower, in field and bower,
In wood and grassy glade.

And who is the host ? 'tis the glorious ghost,
The invisible queen of life,
The earth and the air her minions are :
They serve her without strife.

The Afterglow :

Rich dew is the draught at her banquet quaffed
In silence all carouse,
With rapture deep while mortals sleep,
The wreath is on their brows.

They know not sloth, but beauteous growth
Swells green in every vein,
And morn's bright eyes will see them rise
And bless the hearts of men.

X.

THE EVENING STAR.

THRO' the twilight tender and gray
The lonely evening star
Wafts me a kiss on its slender ray
From a fount of love afar.
And life greets life with heart and eye,
In the glow of a creature sympathy.

O life not moulded as ours,
With clay and spirit and tears,
Glimmering faintly thro' days and hours,
Forespent in its few score years ;
The sheen of thy beauty was laughing abroad
When Abraham knelt at the voice of the Lord.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

O ray so lustrous and long,
Bridging over the heavenly seas !
O brother world, might I hear thy song,
Or gaze on thy golden leas !
But wide-winged fancy alone presumes
A flight beyond breath without angel's plumes.

Perhaps in thy lofty range,
Unlike to the rushing earth,
Above the shadows of sorrow and change.
All love and sinless mirth
Fill up thine orb till it overstreams,
And the pure excess on our bosom gleams.

What throbs in thy heart of fire ?
What exquisite spirits of love
In the tremulous zeal of unknown desire
Those sparkling pulses move ?
Is it joy embodied in light we read
Of souls from our nether darkness freed ?

Yes, robed in their royal white,
I see a throng of the blest ;
And they quiver and flash with a new delight
Around thy luminous breast.
Be ready, my soul, for death's swift car
May bear thee, hope saith, to that evening star.

The Afterglow :

XI.

WEANING FROM EARTH.

OH wean me from this mother's breast,
This breast of earth on which I lie,
Its milk hath lost its strength and zest.
And if I linger here I die.

Still more and more a sense I feel
Within me urging day and night,
As though matured it might reveal
A larger life, a purer light.

It is not that I coldly slight
Great Nature's exquisite array ;
Her beauty is my dear delight,
I bless its presence day by day.

But when within this rounded maze
I see Earth's minions wax and wane,
Then reproduced in cycling phase,
Fulfilling all things o'er again ;

'Tis then my wistful weary heart
Throbs at the promises divine
Which say that tho' I bear a part
In all about this earthly shrine,—

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

A part for sympathy and love,
 Judgment, and ecstasy, and tears,—
I am not Earth's—a voice above
 Salutes me from beyond the spheres ;

From heavenly harps a refrain rings,
 “ Oh, brother, give thy heart to me ;
My spirit to thy spirit clings,
 Thou canst not die—I died for thee.”

XII.

“ *OMNES EODEM COGIMUR.*”

OH, life is just a thoroughfare,
 A miry mart of shops and shows,
With mortals pressing everywhere,
 Alone, in pairs, in groups, and rows :
All to the damp descending stair
 Where silent black Cocytus flows.

Blurred or distinct, or gross or fine,
 A million footprints we discern :
But all one way ;—there's not a sign
 Of passenger on his return ;
None proffers the rejoicing wine
 From his own monumental urn.

The Afterglow :

'The pleasant pictures by the way
We scarce may bide to gaze upon,
Nor ours for long to love and pray
By hallowed fount or altar stone ;
We hear the grim policeman say,
With nodding skull, "Move on, move on."

XIII.

THREE CHARMS OF LIFE.

Oh, bright is life to maid and youth
All crowned with flowers of spring,
A world of beauty, joy, and truth,
Thro' which they dance and sing.

And sweet it is to man and wife,
So love its light endears ;
Tho' joy be tamed by outer strife,
And beauty dim in years.

And calm it is to hoary age,
Awaiting from above
The everlasting heritage
Of beauty, truth, and love.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

XIV.

CONSCIENCE.

She sings no more ; the birdlike notes are dumb,
Which set to music every task ;
Sullen and sad her answers come,
Sullen and short, defiant some ;
We scarcely dare her health to ask.

She smiles no more, the flower of joy is dead ;
Its bright lip-roses wan and drear
Wreathe up no more their cheerful red ;
Sure some unholy blight hath shed
Its melancholy poison here.

Those honest eyes where all unconscious reigned
Gay virgin frankness ever brave,
Why thus averted and constrained,
Or fixed as though their lustre stained
Some haunting spectre of the grave ?

Life's daily web she weaves without a groan,
Stifling the tell-tale tears,
Then lingering listless and alone,
As in a trance, with brow of stone,
A statue of herself appears.

*

The Afterglow :

Which of earth's ills hath wrought this altered
mien ?

No need to breathe its name ;
Only the curse of secret sin
Thus tortures a young life within
The shadow of a deadly shame.

O clenching hands, O sobbing bursting hearts,
O knees that fret God's earth with prayer,
O slumbers torn with ghastly starts,
Your throes are not the only parts
In sin's wild drama of despair !

XV.

AN ALLEGORY.

CONSCIENCE, a were-wolf, thro' the night
The sinner hunts with ghastly cry ;
He hears the howl and in affright
Plunges along thro' dank and dry.

In many a midnight watch alone,
Starting from hideous dream he sweats ;
He knows the beast is tracking on.
And forth again for flight he sets.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

Night after night, day after day,
But dreariest in the morning chill
He hears the hunger howl alway ;
He may not bide a moment still.

At length upon a wide waste ground,
While staggering on in frenzied fear,
He slips, and falling looks around
Upon the demon ravening near.

There gleams a something on the moss,
He seizes it with desperate power,
It is the lofty wayside cross
Blown to his reach within the hour.

He grasps the shaft with shuddering prayer,
And rising at the brute of blood,
With all his force collected there
He brains him with the holy rood.

The Afterglow:

XVI.

OFFENCES.

CAST them away—oh, cumber not the mind
With the harsh deeds of others : let them sink
Into the deepest Lethe. Wherefore shrink
Beneath the echoes of those words unkind,
By thee all unprovoked ? Why sorrow, blind
To the bright world around thee and the brink
Of wide eternity so near ? Ah ! think
What bliss of peace thy spirit there shall find.
Heaven hath a balsam here too—pray for love,
For thee and thine offender ; virtue rare
Hath ardent supplication ; and above,
Swift ministers of peace are prompt to bear
From heart to heart the generous thoughts that
move
The hardest, e'en as ice the sunny air.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

XVII.

WHAT TO REMEMBER.

DROP the veil o'er early years,
Man forgets and God forgives.
Those are dead who caused the tears,—
Ah ! but honest memory lives !

Yes, she lives, and sorrowing reads
Records of rebellious youth ;
And the smarting conscience bleeds
From old wounds of shame and truth.

Shrink not from such tears and blood :
Let them flow as offerings free
To Him who on the barbarous wood
Shed the mingled stream for thee.

Love and work life's little space :
Love for thee hath pardon won,
And thy Lord's accepting grace
Smiles upon thee like the sun.

Pass then shades of early years,
And no more the heart affray,
Bide, O memory of the tears
Which thy Saviour wiped away !

The Afterglow :

XVIII.

AFTER MUCH TALK.

I WEARY of debate and musing
Mid all so clear around, above :
I feel that truth is ne'er confusing
If sought with torches lit by love.

We catch our flame from coals around us,
Earthly their lustre and their scent ;
And so the dust and smoke confound us
With darkness mercy never meant.

Up, out with me upon the mountain !
Flowers bloom by thousands on the way.
We'll pluck and steep them in the fountain,
And weave and sing a grateful lay.

We'll hymn the spirit of all beauty,
Whose love inspires our purest joys,
And prompts to us a holy duty,
That we should prize these lovely toys.

For toys they are, these founts and flowers,
Outpoured so freely, and unfurled
To beautify man's dusty hours,
And wreath his heart with thro' the world.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

Toys by the heavenly Father given
To us, the children of His love ;
Types of our heritage in heaven,
Of founts and flowers which shine above.

XIX.

PRA YER.

OH ! check not thou the current of our prayer,
Doubting, as if philosophy could show
The issue, source, and cure of every woe ;
As if, benumbed in Zeno's marble chair,
It were our part alone to sit and bear,
In deaf disdain of that harmonious flow
Of living healing waters by whose glow
God's spirit soothes man's spirit everywhere.
Thou canst not feel ?—ungrateful ! rise, and
scan,
The mercies, the munificence of grace ;
Which pours like sunshine at the prayer of
man,
The light of God from his Redeemer's face ;
Bridging the gulf of death with lofty span
Of love illuminating time and space.

The Afterglow :

xx.

TO A QUESTIONER.

SEEK not from me an answer curt and dry
To those dark questions which the holy strain,
Speaking in oracles doth not explain.
These have their issues in eternity.
Oh, bow with me to the white throne on high,
And for sweet loving graces rather pray,
And strength for following in the narrow way
Our great Exemplar, both to live and die.
There stands His cross ; thou need'st a sheltering
rock ;
Keep thy heart lowly, thou art still a child :
Heed not the noise of those who scold or mock,
Christ loves the meek—be thou for ever mild
With cheerful ministration tend his flock,
Whate'er thy name thou shalt not die beguiled.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

XXI.

*“DIFFICILIS QUERULUS LAUDATOR
TEMPORIS ACTI.”*

’TWAS ever so this prejudice of years,
With men not clear of bile and melancholy,
Who rarely smile but at some human folly,
And hold more peevish bitterness than tears,
Frowning on novelty with angry fears.
These dread experiment as thing unholy,
And measure thought’s most generous daring
 solely
By the oft-conned result of past careers.
Oh, dead to joy, who hope’s young flowers
 despise,
 And trample all the garlands of to-day !
Ye would have banned great Galileo’s skies,
 And waged with Verulam a deadly fray ;
And grudged the blind old bard of Paradise
 Those few poor coins for his immortal lay.

The Afterglow :

XXII.

LIFE IS PASSING AWAY.

POET, who deemest all beneath
The fame of an amaranthine wreath,
Whose portion is that divinest art
Thro' beauty and truth to exalt the heart,
Look up and pray,—Heaven twines with the
bay
Pure lilies of love which will never decay ;
For the laurel crown
Is but thistle-down,
When life is passing away.

Satirist, with fantastic pen
Girding at all your brother men,
So lynx-eyed and voluble each to expose,
Their weakness and meanness and pitiful woes :
Relent while you may :—Oh love and pray,
For life with its strife is shrinking away,
With its fashions and forms,
Its passions and storms,
Oh, life is passing away.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

Sumptuous lady, stately and fair,
With your swan-like neck and your trellised hair,
With smile as potent as royal frown,
A queen confess'd in your beauty's crown,
Ah, radiant clay—stoop, kneel, and pray,
For life, light life, is wafting away ;
 Like your posy's bloom,
 Like its subtle perfume,
Oh, life is passing away.

Ah, dapper stripling, in essences sweet,
With your jewelled fingers and dainty feet ;
Surely this earth of mould and dew
Must be but a vulgar earth to you ;
Yet kneel I say—in the dust and pray,
For your glittering sands are dropping away ;
 Like the gloss of your glove,
 Like the flame of your love,
Gay life is passing away.

Tottering beaux, who snuffle and sigh
As ye dream of the days when your sap ran high,
When first at the revel, the hunt, the ball,
Pleasure and pride were your all in all ;
Put dreams away—repent and pray,
For your vain old life is ebbing away,
 Like a watery sun
 When the day is done,
Chill life is passing away.

The Afterglow :

Garrulous dames, who hold your delight
In scorning and scandal to wear the night ;
Whose tongues weave wit out of sin and shame,
But yield not a prayer a lost soul to reclaim ;

Hush ! while ye may—for your hairs are gray,
And the night is at hand when none may pray.

Oh, each idle word

Far above is heard,

And life is passing away.

Millionaire, with castles and land,
And a hundred tenants, each hat in hand,
With churches and places to give at will,
And a fabulous rent-roll lengthening still ;

Retire each day—prepare and pray,
For you, yes, you, have a rent to pay,
And short is the lease
Which with life must cease,
And life is passing away.

Men of the mart, so smug and shrewd,
Who mean the rich when you praise the good,
Who batten on mortgages, stock, and scrip,
And make your gain when your neighbours slip ;
Leave 'change for a day—give alms and pray,
For bankruptcy threatens on that dread day
When all is loss
But one poor Cross,
And life is passing away.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

O dreary fanatic with fiery eye,
So bitterly pious, so swift to defy,
So ready to sound God's wide deep word
By the knots of your own ill-twisted cord ;

Thrust self away—love while you pray,
For love will abide tho' all decay,
Tho' knowledge shall quail,
And prophecy fail,
And life is passing away.

Oh strong young man, so buxom and bold,
With brow of marble and locks of gold,
Whose ringing heel with muscle and limb,
Could crush into dust death's skeleton grim ;

Oh pause in your play—reflect and pray,
For your hours with their powers are waning
away,
Press on for truth,
Through glorious youth,
For life is passing away.

Beautiful child with rapturous eyes,
Gazing on all with a glad surprise,
Dancing along with your painted ball,
Heart of your parents and joy of all,

Oh learn to say,—as you meekly pray,
“ Thro' loving obedience lies my way
To the home above
Where all is love,
And life is passing away.”

The Afterglow :

Oh brothers and sisters, whate'er your degree,
You are treading the slopes of eternity,
And God's fair light will guide you aright,
With flowers by day and stars by night,

Only love and say,—while you work and pray,
“ My soul with my life is passing away,
Passing away
To the judgment day ; ”

Oh life is passing away.

XXIII.

THE ROCK.

STILL to the Jew a stumbling block
And to the fool a jest ;
Hearts' home to us, our spirit's rock,
And citadel of rest.

Above the seas of age and space
Ever in sight art thou,
Fair havens all around thy base,
The day star on thy brow.

Deep freighted with the flesh and soul
Faith's vessel laboureth on,
Towards Thee at once her guide and goal,
Beacon and magnet stone.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

Above the storm thy crest uprears
 Ever hope's golden name ;
And thro' the long dumb night of tears
 Glows thy consoling flame.

Thou art the crowning corner-stone,
 Bright headland of the isles,
Where all about the Mercy throne,
 The land of Beulah smiles.

Where dearest spirits justified,
 By glory's fountain rove,
Secure, now death himself hath die'd,
 Of everlasting love.

Row on, row on, ye nights and days,
 Life's boatmen black and white !
I long my spirit to amaze
 With that celestial sight.

Away each needless burden cast,
 Heed neither strain nor shock,
So that unwrecked we gain at last
 The harbour of Christ's rock !

The Afterglow :

XXIV.

AN ASPIRATION.

OH, to do something for the Lord of life !
To bear His torch, to kindle living fire
In a dead heart, or from an earthly lyre
To breathe divine persuasion with peace rife,
Such as to make one drop the bloodless knife,
And kneel 'mid sobs of penitent desire,
What gift or dearer grace could heart require
Amid a callous world of craft and strife ?
This gift is thine, O weakest child of God,
Who self-denying livest for thy Lord,
Making his name a flower and not a rod,
Fragrant and beautiful, belov'd, adored ;
Scattering love's golden seedlings o'er the sod
Of homely fields,—earnests of Heav'n's reward.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

XXV.

THE HARP DIVINE.

THERE is a harp of ancient mould,
The grace of whose celestial tone
Can melt alike both young and old,
And turn to flesh the heart of stone.

The power of this in David's hand
Eclipsed the blaze of Judah's crown,
When pealing thro' the promised land,
It bade the adoring tribes bow down.

Bow down the heart, and hold the breath,
While earth and air His praises fill
Who brought them up from chains and death
To freedom's throne on Zion's hill.

And many a seer's impulsive stroke
Hath clashed the strings 'mid burning tears,
As wrath divine within him woke
The spectral woes of looming years.

Now overflowing Judah's land,
Its voice majestic rolls along
In heavenly truths from strand to strand,
And fills the world with glorious song.

The Afterglow:

Now ever as it swells and wanes,
In simple tone or full accord,
The steady keynote of its strains
Is Jesus, Saviour, Life, and Lord.

But ah ! the world is charmed in vain,
On adders' ears the sweet notes fall ;
Some dance as at a viol's strain,
Some fight as at a trumpet's call.

But they who with a noble thirst
Imbibe the grace those tunes impart,
All bonds of sin and death shall burst,
Freed by the God within their heart.

Great faith is theirs with eagle wing,
And love that can all loves combine,
And radiant hope which joys to sing
In concert with the Harp Divine.

XXVI.

MICROCOSM.

THIS microcosm, this small world of man,
Swings in its space amid beloved spheres,
Shining and shone upon thro' all life's years,
Attracting and attracted—Mercy's plan—
By those dear orbs whose paths we daily scan.

What interchanging rays of joy and tears,
What force of mingled light dispelling fears,
Since loving heart on heart to shine began!

Now ever, as life holds, each tenderer light
Grows pale, irregularly, one by one
Waning to sad eclipse ; and still our sight
Turns to the remnant ; but when these are gone,
Oh, be not life prolonged,—lest day seem
night,
And the heart grope for death, cold, dark, alone !

The Afterglow:

XXVII.

*"WOULD YOU LIVE TO A
HUNDRED?"*

WERE it of choice, the shuddering heart saith
nay;

Think of old age's leafless avenue,
Which deepening snows continually strew,
Unsunned by hope of sweet returning May,
And tracked on weary crutches day by day.

All dead the brightest flowers of every hue,
Friendship and love all dead, and in the dew
Of tears their tombs shine dimly far away.
Oh, rather would I, this dear hand in mine,
Sink in my autumn's gently fading glow,
Each sense still joying in its gift divine.

"Tis thus we prate from reason's outer show:
But the great after truths which all enshrine,
The Lord of youth and age alone can know.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

XXVIII.

THE CUP OF LIFE.

My thirst is nearly quenched ; I drain
The lees of life refined tho' small ;
But would not fill the cask again
To quaff the alternate wine and gall.

Yet oh ! the richness of the wine !
My heart still feels it sparkling up ;
Dying, I'll bless the Hand Divine,
That reached to me life's loving cup.

XXIX.

THE CHILD.

Flitting along his groove of flowers
The singing victim goes,
And in each hand a rose ;
Little he cares for the changing hours,
While sweetly the south wind blows.

The Afterglow:

It ripples in fire his locks of gold ;
His eyes are brave and blue,
And their laughing lights are true :
He leaves no dint on the grassy mould ;
But a print on the silver dew.

His feet are too soft for this iron earth.
Alas ! they must be shod,
Alas ! he must feel the rod,
But ah ! had his beauty withered in birth,
He had never known love nor God.

XXX.

AS LITTLE CHILDREN.

WE smile on those unconscious hours
When to our childhood's light regard
Life was a bank of summer flowers,
And death a green churchyard.

Smiling we sigh—for scarce a shred,
The weary working world supplies
Of all the brilliants fancy spread
Before our ardent eyes.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

And low are those aspirings laid,
Which, spurning reason's faint controul,
Girt on hope's iris wings, and made
An angel of the soul.

Pale fireflies all!—in life's gray eve,
Still flitting by the stream of years;
How hardly can the heart believe
They cost her burning tears.

In the last sunset, cold and low,
Whose dews are wept from loving eyes,
Be mine the Spirit's peace to know,
And smile at memories;

Committing all to mercy's powers,
A child once more in meek regard;
Farewell my bank of faded flowers,
Welcome, the green churchyard!

The Afterglow :

XXXI.

*TO A LITTLE CHURCH AMONG
THE TREES.*

DOVELIKE church, within thy nest,
By the whispering woods caress'd,
Smiling there all golden gray
At the stilly fall of day,
From the chancel ruby bright
Flashing back the morning light,
First of all the hamlet-home,
To tell the star of day is come,
 What has been the gray dove's song,
 All among the woods so long

Twice two hundred years, they say,
Men have met in thee to pray ;
What a solemn thought is there,
Twice two hundred years of prayer
From the thousand lips of clay
Long to silence past away !
And we know the strain and word
Which their suppliant hearts upstirred ;

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

Psalms, and creeds, and litanies,
Sacraments and homilies,
Gathered each a fragrant flower,
Full of healing mystic power,
From the paradise divine
Of the Holy Spirit's shrine,
And wreathed by reverent hearts and minds
Alike for princes and for hinds.

Dovelike church, within thy nest,
By the whispering woods caress'd,
May'st thou thus thy heaven-taught song
Thro' all coming years prolong ;
Song of grace and faith and truth,
Cheering age and charming youth,
Till life no longer need thy call,
Till Truth and Love be one, and all.

The Afterglow :

XXXII.

SUMMER EVENING BELLS.

OH summer evening chime !
The tender choruses of early years,
 To your low calls reply ;
And from the silent depths of time,
 Above the wreck of joys and fears,
 A whispering wave of memory,
Breaks o'er my heart in tears.

What glides from yonder group
 Of crimson cloud isles in the flaming west ?
 Ah, see the seraphim !
Earthward like circling doves they swoop,
 Then pause midway, and from each breast
 Slow blending a pure stream of hymn,
 Steeps air in holy rest.

The dead are o'er me now ;
 A mystical harmonious dance they twine :
 All wear the radiant seal,
A dawning star on every brow,
 Of a new choir the angelic sign :
 Thro' sapphire depths their eyes reveal,
 The life of love divine.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

And these could droop and die ?

Oh glorious change beyond conception bright !

And these have borne the clay ?

Ah, how Christ's smile can beautify !

Before its sweet constraining might,

No shadow from the dream of day,

May dim the immortal light.

Each shining one I know,

The splendour but enhances love's amaze

With strange exalting peace,

And as they stoop adoring low,

Or soar in quickening bursts of praise,

My heart foretastes in rapturous ease,

The bliss of coming days.

They wane : the chime is still :

And pallid evening, with her sweetbriar breath,

Sighs to me here alone.

But new delights my being fill,

And trembling with the joy of faith,

I feel upon these steps of stone

How beautiful is death.

The Afterglow :

XXXIII.

KIND WORDS.

THERE is a legend from the South,
I loved it from my earliest hour,
Of one who never opened mouth,
But forth there fell a pearl or flower.

Princess she was, and passing fair,
Her praises are for ever new;
And you may find a moral there,
For Christian ladies ripe and true.

Pure thoughts expressed like jewels shine,
And gentle words are roses sweet,
And all is blest, if not divine,
Where these harmonious graces meet.

Such gems and flowers are not of earth,
The light and fragrance they impart,
Joint symbols of their heavenly birth,
Spring from God's home, a loving heart.

Oh, loving heart ! oh, gentle voice !
Rich gifts of Him who loves us all,
Your very names make men rejoice,
And smile amid their earthly thrall.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

No health so weak, no home so drear,
But ye can every ill control ;
Faith, hope, and peace hang round to hear
Your soothing music of the soul.

XXXIV.

THE GARDEN.

OUR terrace holds a labyrinth minute
Of chequered gravels many hued, which foil
Bright blooming plots within ; and centering all,
Its white lip ringed with smoothest turf, a pool
Just floats a lily and reflects the sky.
Grey vases proffer round like mantling cups,
The scented radiance of outpouring flowers.
Against the fiery flashes of the west,
Sways solemnly a plume of rooky elms,
The shadowing screen of summer afternoons,
Till evening falls ; then in their blackened arms
Nestles the red and melancholy sun.

Oh spot beloved of few ! to few revealed ;—
Yet blessing all with untumultuous joy,
Whom friendship welcomes to its secret charms.
Content here praises Heaven—and happy Love
Chaunts to the birds when their spring pipings
cease ;
For here, a halcyon on the tide of years,
He broods secure within a nest of flowers.

XXXV.

CHILDREN'S SUMMER FEAST.

COME to the summer feast away,
 Come to the parson's garden ;
Come in and see the children play,
 Clerk, sexton, and churchwarden.

Here's some in smocks, and some in frocks,
And some with pretty braided locks,
And some to comb whose hair like shocks
 The task would be a hard one.

Come every little lad and lass,
 The happy sun won't blind us ;
The tedded hay is on the grass,
 Let's hide, and try who'll find us ;
Or join a ring, and dance and sing,
"Tis I am queen and you are king ;
They're cricketing like anything
 Upon the field behind us.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

But hark ! the merry tinkling sound
Now calls us to the table,
Where tea and cake and buns abound,
On trestles stout and stable ;
No longer slow as little slugs,
Away they run with cups and mugs,
And small ones, too, with lugs and tugs,
As fast as they are able.

Thus skips away the afternoon,
'Mid frolics without measure ;
And evening shadows fall too soon,
When daylight is a treasure.
Yet still there's fun—away they run,
To eat more butterbread and bun,
Then sing a hymn when all is done,
And thank God for their pleasure.

The Afterglow :

xxxvi.

SONG.

COME, Mary, come to the daily school,

Come with me over the windy hill ;
Down in the valley is line and rule,
Down in the valley all is still.

All is still but the children's voice,

Down at the foot of the windy hill,
Murmuring on a monotonous noise,
And the larks and the lambs that never are still.

Chirping and bleating, no sound beside ;

Come, then, over the windy hill,
The sun smiles bright on the pasture wide.
The smile of heaven on the windy hill.

xxxvii.

THE BOY'S CLASS.

LOOK at my ruddy apes,

How thro' the court they trapse,

Each on the threshold-stone louting full low :
Now every hat is hung,
Stand up, and hold your tongue,
Brave little ploughboys all in a row.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

Gruff are their voices,

Odd are their noises,

Not much accustomed their noses to blow ;

Yet are their faces clean,

And their stout smocks of green

Shine in the summer sun all in a row.

“ Now let us catechize,—

Tommy, don’t rub your eyes.

Where is Jerusalem ? Why, don’t you know ?

Pshaw ! not in Galilee,—

That’s far away you see,

Nearer to Lebanon covered with snow.

“ Now say your collect, lad ;—

Come, that is not so bad ;

Tell me what teaches the Gospel to-day.

Well, that is not amiss,—

Only remember this,

You must endeavour to do what you say.

“ You must endeavour

From evil to sever,

Each night and morning for God’s help to pray ;

Heaven’s throne is reached by prayer,

And He is ever there,

Who is the Truth, and the Life, and the Way.”

The Afterglow:

XXXVIII.

CHRISTMAS SONG:

TO THE BOYS OF THE NIGHT SCHOOL.

My brave village boys who tho' working all day,

Have sense to come round me at night,
To write and to cipher, to read and to pray
For the Spirit of wisdom and light.

Tho' your hands be as brown as the table you press,

Tho' the sunshine have rusted your hair,
Tho' the stain of the fallow still cleave to your dress,
'Tis toil's honest colours you wear.

You are young,—so was He who in Bethlehem's stall

This day on the shepherds had smiled ;
You are poor,—so was He, for the Lord of us all,
Appeared as a carpenter's child.

He worked as you work, in youth's lowly estate,
Enthroned in dread majesty now ;—
Give Him your young hearts—and whatever
your fate,

There's a crown for the labourer's brow.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

XXXIX.

THE OLD FIDDLER.

IN Suffolk, fifty years ago,
How altered are the times !
There lived, as few will care to know,
A certain Tommy Grimes.

Fiddler he was, and blind and old,
Thro' lane and fieldway led
By one of thoro' kindred mould,
Who lent his eyes for bread.

Now Tommy was the loud delight
Of every village round ;
For all that was amiss in sight,
He made it up in sound.

So arm in arm they forth would fare,
And, surely as the day,
To every frolic, feast, and fair,
The twain would find their way.

Meanwhile at parsonage, hall, and farm,
It was their wont to call ;
Kitchen and cellar kept them warm,
And music paid for all.

The Afterglow :

Oh, how we children clattered in ;
Were they not joyful times ?
Screaming, when heard the fiddle's din,
“ Oh ! here is Master Grimes ! ”

Then Tommy, like a blinking owl,
No city judge more grave,
Drank all our healths from brimming bowl,
Then scraped a tuning stave.

Next “ Water-parted,” “ Bluebeard's march,”
Or, as his spirits rose,
“ Mrs. Macleod ” shook out the starch,
And led in “ Off she goes.”

And many a good old song he knew,
With voice more deep than sweet,
He sang of Boney and True-blue,
Of Rodney and his fleet.

But what filled us with joy supreme
Was neither song nor dance,
“ The old Farmyard,” with changeful scream,
This made our spirits prance.

The crowing cock, the cackling hen,
And oh ! the donkey's bray !
The mooing cow—“ Again, again ! ”
Was all that we could say.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

How rang the house that afternoon,
With many a tiny crow !
Each strove to imitate the tune
Of Tommy's jerking bow.

Now Tommy long has been at rest,
Wrapt in his Suffolk clay ;
And they who loved to hear him best
Are following, old and gray.

Yet haply some, while memory stays,
Will not disdain the rhymes,
Which would bring back those simple days,
The days of Tommy Grimes.

XL.

THE OLD SHEPHERD.

FULL eight and eighty years have cast
Their load on Master Sams,
And he his days and nights hath past
Among the ewes and lambs.

Now often by the low hearth fire
His old dame sitting nigh,
I listen while the shepherd sire
Talks on of days gone by.

The Afterglow:

He tells me how thro' gate and slade,
And down the grassy hollow,
As he his pipe before them played
His flock would surely follow.

And parted once for near a year,
How when they met again
His sheep came bleating far and near.
And crowding in his train.

How at all hours, or dark or bright,
He to his fold would go,
In storm and rain and starless night,
And thro' the crunching snow.

And many a sound his heart had stirred
In the wide fields alone,
And many a falling star and bird
Unusual sights had shown.

And yet he never felt alarm,
Tho' not a soul was near;
No creature breathed that he would harm,
Then wherefore should he fear?

And then as soon as daylight shone,
He passed each sheep in view;
Bless ye, he knew them every one,
As well as I know you.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

Their health and hurt by many a sign
To him were clear as day ;
He saw them change, and peak and pine,
And none could say him nay.

And much he loved his dogs to praise,
And roundly would declare
They watched the sheep and learned their
With more than human care. [ways

His cottage fronts the House of God,
And surely as the chimes
He creeps across the sunny road,
He loves the holy times.

Nor less at home the voice of prayer
His meek heart seems to please,
So low he bows his silvery hair
And bends his knotted knees.

He ever bares his reverent head
To hear the Sacred Word ;
And when the message all is read,
Gives glory to the Lord.

And most those texts his spirit move,
They make him smile and weep,
Which speak of Jesus and His love,
The Shepherd and His sheep.

The Afterglow :

He holds his joy in simple faith,
That light in reason's stead
Which shows the blessed life in death
For which the Saviour bled.

He knows the stain of human-kind,
But cannot tell the why ;
He owns his reason weak and blind,
What more can you or I ?

When the great Shepherd shall divide
Between the kids and lambs,
May we be kneeling at the side
Of humble Master Sams.

XLI.

THE SEXTON.

THE old man digs the infant's grave
With all he hath of trembling strength,
His mind and limbs in that small cave
Are busy but with depth and length.

His thoughts quiesce in narrow range,
By few comparisons beguiled ;
To follow seemeth nothing strange
The death steps of the little child.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

It is to him no wondrous case,
And his are nigh to eighty years ;
More babes than men have found a place
Of refuge here from pain and tears.

It seems he wiser is than we,
When, as he pats the binding sward,
He only saith, "The child will see
The loving kindness of the Lord."

By him no more is thought or said,
Who having roofed the low abode,
Shoulders his mattock and his spade,
And totters on his cottage road.

But we who toil not at the flints,
With fancies fluttering where they please,
Find in these fulnesses and stints
Of years, perplexing mysteries.

No whit our questioning avails,
Of life or death the truth is one,
One wonder, to which wisdom quails,
As eyelids to the dazing sun.

Judge life but twilight, death the day,
Follow the star thy Lord assigns ;
There comes a sunrise in whose ray
The heart shall read time's darkest lines.

The Afterglow :

Thus, thinking more have peace no less
Than this grey servitor of death ;
Pass to thy work, and Heaven will bless
The wisdom of a patient faith.

XLII.

THE KNELL.

FROM its pulpit—the grey church tower,
I heard the blind bell say,
“ Bless, oh bless the hour—for now
A soul hath soared away.”

In pain and poverty bound
To a phantom old and mean,
That knell is freedom’s sound—and now
The slave may be a queen !

A queen in right of birth,
Christ’s heritage of love ;
And the trampled weed of earth is now
A starry flower above.

When my knell shall thicken the air,
Cry not “ alas ! ” for me ;
In bonds my life was fair—oh, then
The bliss of liberty !

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

XLIII.

THE GRAVE.

THERE is a little long green hill,
No door it hath but a cave below ;
A spade in an hour would make it,
The turn of a wheel would break it,
When all is past for good and for ill,
Under the curve of that low hill
 You and I must go.

Shadow fills all space within,
There is no room for the sun to play ;
His enlivening flames he may flap on the roof,
From the chill black vault he must keep aloof ;
No breath is there, no musical din,
Dumb and blind the mole within
 Burrows his ancient way.

Shrink not—no soul of man lies there ;
It would pierce any mould or marble thro' ;
That which can neither rot nor die
Will soar to its source thro' the stars on high,
For it leaves its worthless worn-out care,
Its body, for earth and her worms to wear,
 And is clothed in raiment new.

The Afterglow :

But plant with roses that low green mound,
Fairest symbols of life upon earth :
Like sweetest memories let them bloom,
And kiss into kindness the face of the tomb,
Sunning the hearts of all around
With types of the heavenly garden ground,
Death no more, but birth.

XLIV.

ON THE GRAVE OF A YOUNG MAN.

SPRING hath laid her pall on him,
The long green grass ;
Tender blessings fall on him,
Here as we pass ;
He who lies beneath our feet
Died all young and incomplete.

Who thought to deplore for him,
Man in his strength ?
Joy we hoped in store for him,
Years in bright length ;
Strew your emblematic flowers,
Life, like these, is but for hours.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

Stay not to weep over him,
Vain are more tears ;
God's rest doth cover him,
Safer than years ;
Brief work in him was shown,
Brother, hence and do thine own.

XLV.

THE FUNERAL.

WITH the breeze our hopes were veering,
April clouds droop late or soon ;
But the sun all shadows clearing,
Filled with gold the afternoon,
Filled the birds with life and tune.

So down Gade's secluded valley,
April stars and bells between,
While my footsteps seemed to dally
With the flowery velvet green,
Soothed me all the quiet scene.

Lingering on in truth I wandered
Down the sunny sloping mead
All alone, and calmly pondered
That which Heaven had just decreed.
Doom of men, and beast, and weed.

The Afterglow:

For in measured sadness knelling
Through its lattice o'er the stream,
Moaned the village belfry, telling
Of a finished mortal dream,
Of a gloom transformed to gleam.

Telling how a soul had shifted
Its frail shrine ;—when lo ! the clay,
By the dusky bearers lifted,
Gained the church—no more to pray—
By the old accustomed way.

I had known its spirit holy,
Disciplined thro' thorny years
In the teacher's office lowly ;
Now were closed its pains and tears,
Weariness and woman's fears.

“ And,” I thought, “ oh faithful servant,
Thou hast wrought a rugged soil,
Ploughing, sowing, ever fervent ;
Not in vain thy sacred toil,
Not in vain the soothing oil

“ Thou hast poured on bosoms dreary,
Wounded by life's urging goad ;
Thou no more shalt wane nor weary,
Thou hast cast thine every load
On the bosom of thy God.”

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

At the instant April gladness
Flashed o'er coffin, scarf, and pall,
Scattering all the outer sadness
With the sunshine's heavenly call
To look up—for love is all.

O'er my head in ruffling riot,
Thro' the elm-tops flushed the breeze ;
At my feet in solemn quiet
Every grass blade seemed at peace,
On the beds where sorrows cease.

Then the old thought came of power,
And the pomps of wealth and race,
Lengthening out the mournful hour,
Lengthening out the hirelings' face
With a sombre show of grace.

But the same sweet tones of Scripture
Holy Church to all assigns,
Rich and poor drink calm and rapture
From the glorious hope that shines
In the Spirit's loving lines.

Not a phrase but soothes emotion,
Earth to earth the one sad sound,
And the simple brief devotion
Sheds a tender awe around,
Through the silent crowded ground.

The Afterglow:

One long look within the narrow
Gulf each sobbing mourner flings ;
Then they pass to hide their sorrow
Where the gate behind them swings,
And, but for the bird that sings,

All is still ;—with dogged labour
Now the sexton fills the cave,
And upon his ancient neighbour
Piles the darkness of the grave,
Piles the mound where flowers shall wave.

Leave him to his reverend tillage
In the garden of the Lord ;
Soon must he and all the village
To their cells beneath the sward
Sink with helpless mute accord.

But of all their burdens lightened,
Dropping here their cloaks of clay,
May their souls thro' faith be brightened,
Ere they wing their unknown way,
E'en as hers we leave to-day.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

XLVI.

AFTER A FUNERAL.

1

AN hour to die,

A week to lie,

And they lay in its coffer the worn robe by :
The robe of the flesh all frayed and torn
With the wear of the world and its many a thorn.
We shall see it no more ;—each hath sped to its
goal,
Life-long confederates, body and soul,
One at our feet in the holy sward,
And one far away at the gates of the Lord.

2

Dreary the change

In a narrow range

Which comes over parsonage, hall, or grange.
When life's last volume of labour and love
Is shut with a c'asp we cannot remove ;
Closed are its pictures, music and prayers,
Youth's blotted histories, chapters of cares,
Only the echoes, only the shades
Flit up and down thro' memory's glades,
Watched for at night, when, slumber apart,
We study our grief by the lamp of the heart.

The Afterglow :

3

Blank and bleak
Is the world to the weak,
All bereft with a home to seek.
But the widow must rise from the cold hearth-
stone
Ere cometh the stranger to claim his own ;
She must seek for a home wherein to weep
Ere stranger eyes thro' the doorway peep ;
Ere strange notes ring from the old church pew,
Ere the white slab gleameth icy and new
From the chancel wall ; so, dark and away
In a corner kneeleth the widow grey,
And sorrowing orphans sob around,
Pale and craped, with eyes on the ground ;
And they linger last in the green churchyard,
And water with tears the fresh green sward,
As they think that no flower, or sunshine, or rain
Shall gladden the sleeper—oh ! never again !

4

Blessed be faith,
Which smiling saith,
No sorrow hath Heaven, nor tears, nor death ;
So they turn from the gates, and the lilacs they
planted
In the garden by loved ones for ever haunted,

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

And they breathe the effectual fervent prayer,
And they feel in their silence the Comforter
there ;

And they pass the first smile from face to face,
Elder to younger, dear hearts to brace.

Now work may not wait,—for time is strong,
And stayeth no more for psalm than song ;
And mirth and agony, right and wrong
He whirleth them all with the stars along.

Yet the breath of his rushing is wholesome and
sweet

And he dries up our tears as the dew at our feet.
Lighting the desolate twilights of care
With sunny humanities ardent and fair.

So again cometh joy as tho' sorrow were not
And the clouds roll away to some distant spot,
For there rageth no storm between birth and
death

But ye can conquer it, time and faith !
Till side by side in the tranquil tomb
With joy and sorrow we bide our doom.

The Afterglow:

XLVII.

INCONSOLABLE.

ONE summer evening close and mild
And grey as twilight sea,
There sat with elf-locks grey and wild
A peasant widow with a child
Beneath a grey old tree.

Her home within the orchard lies,
The sun behind it sets ;
Her hamlet by a name I prize,
They call St. Margaret's.

A ridge of cottage gardens there
With many a hazel nook,
The eye o'er mead and cornfield bear
Down to the shining brook.

Now as my coming step she heard,
The widow raised her head ;
Yet made she never sign nor word,
Her tears salute instead.

“ Oh, widow !—still the same lament ?
But think what months have run
Since death, by heavenly goodness sent.
Set free your suffering son.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

Said she with sobs, “ Eight months and more
Sin’ Will was ta’en from me !
It seems as hard as ’twas afore
His empty bed to see;

“ For two whole year by day and night,
He never would complain ;
His wounds and medicine were a sight !
I nursed him all in vain.”

“ But, widow, Will is now at ease ;
Is not that sweet to know ?
Think rather on his endless peace,
Than on your passing woe.

“ Why, you and I, and all the place,
In Will a pattern find,
Who, thro’ his bitter nights and days,
So patient was, and kind.

“ He only prayed to be at rest,
And all he asked is given ;
Then put these murmurs from your breast,
And think of Will in heaven.

“ No heart could pray for his return,
With all his weary breath ;
Trust, then, your loving Lord, and learn
How merciful is death.”

The Afterglow:

My words were sounds, she beat her breast :

“ My Will, poor Will, is gone ;
For two long year his sores I drest,
And I am all alone.”

“ No, not alone, my friend, you are,
With daughter kind and strong ;
And little grandchild blooming there,
You love to hear her song.”

“ Ay, that I do,”—yet still with tears
She made her constant moan :

“ I nursed my boy for two whole years,
Poor Will, poor Will is gone !”

Again, I showed how Jesus taught,
And worked and loved and bled,
And all for Gospel truth which brought
Sure comfort for the dead.

“ Twas all in vain ; her poor rude heart.
Blind in its cloud of woe,
With not a single shade would part,
Would not a sob forego.

And so her case and mine, I cast
On Him whose love will rain
Surely and sweetly, if not fast,
Time’s healing balsam at the last,
Though reason teach in vain.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

XLVIII.

THE THREE LAST SONGS OF FELIX.

FAITH's last token all as he lay,
When he had proffered with truthful tongue ;
Swan-like thus, ere he passed away,
Felix to his dear ones sung :—

1.

Raise up my head with the pillows,
When lower I fancy the depths of the grave ;
And the throb and the murmur of smothering
billows,
And I hear the night winds rave.

Loop up the bed curtain lightly,
Let me gaze on that great white throne of a
cloud,
Heaven's hills over earth tower brightly,
One will see them no more in the shroud.

And just too strong is the day ;
Draw the muslin clear all along the rod :
I think of the pure one in spotless array,
Between my soul and my God !

The Afterglow :

I am sated with study and books,
But read me out of the wisest and best,
Of the penitent king who had no proud looks,
And then I will try to rest.

Whether for minutes or years,
To wake in eternity or to-morrow,
God knows,—I am ready,—oh ! dry your tears,
For they are my only sorrow.

2.

Spend no coin on feathers and shows,
Spend on the poor and not on the dead ;
Holy books and comforting clothes,
Blessings for soul, and body, and head.

And lay me down in my own churchyard,
All in the sunshine under the wall :
The grey bell-tower shall be my guard,
And mellow the east wind's withering bawl.

Hang no sable on altar or board ;
Flowers if you will, the best in their bloom,
When the promise is joy in the Lord,
Say, would you darken His house to a tomb ?

Sink no dungeon of mortar and brick,
Thwart not provident Nature's plan ;
Little it matters—tardy or quick—
Soulless clay is the slough of man.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

Lay me a cross on the roof above,
No quaint work of fanciful art ;
Let it look up to all I love,
And touch with a truth the loiterer's heart.

One brief, merciful text carve there,
The Spirit's word on the door of death,
Calling up charity, hope, and prayer,
Stars of Christian Catholic faith.

Voice of the teacher the tombs outlive,
Make these vocal when we are dead.
Heed to this let true love give ;
All my wishes are freely said.

3

My day is done ; shadows you cannot see
From the deep night of death encompass me.
Hang up my hat : no more in gardens fair,
Or flowerful meadows, shall I drink the air
Of fragrant Mays and Junes. Henceforth I
roam

Thro' the unseen ; farewell, O little home,
The work of loving hands ! peace to thy roof !
May sin and sorrow ever keep aloof
From thy bright eaves ! Now have I tasted all
Sweetest and dearest of this varied ball :
Without ambition, honour : priceless ease :
Pure love unchanging : faith's great mysteries,

The Afterglow :

Which ever like the autumnal morning's haze
Insure to present joy those golden days,
Eternal, dawning now ! Oh, happy thought !
True friends, true love, fair home ; and each
hath brought
A symbol of the land of all delight,
Whose hues of glory fill my spirit's sight.
Leave me a moment while my heart hath power,
I would give thanks for this delicious hour !

XLIX.

DESPONDENCY.

DESPOND not thus : of him who dreams to shun
The common doom of grief, we say, that man
Sees only half humanity, and the plan
Of life's probation maimed. Nature foredone,
Would sink to chaos, felt she but the sun
Day after day unclouded by the van
Of battling storms, and since her life began
She from her wrecks new prowess ever won.
Despond not, then ; since Nature's loving Lord
Is thine. Thy sins and not thy sorrows
mourn !

Thou hast experience, and God's sovran word
Of promise that thou ne'er should'st be forlorn.
Let tears, like rain upon the withering sward,
Call up faith's flowers, for these thy heart
was born.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

L.

TO A MOURNER.

STOOP not for ever over sorrow's loom,
Making thy heart the factory of despair,
Toiling for wages of exacting care,
On webs of drear, unprofitable gloom.

Why thus transform life's chamber to a tomb ?
Come forth and see how thro' the evening air
Calm, odorous, musical,—types everywhere
Of glorious power in loving mercy bloom.
Behold the text writ with the sun's last hand
In crimson cypher on the golden sky,
Proclaiming joyous morrow to the land !
Then let thy heart take comfort thro' the eye,
For thus in Gospel text bright cyphers stand,
Proclaiming future joy's eternity.

The Afterglow :

LI.

PAST AND PRESENT.

ONCE more along the willowy stream,
With its familiar trickling tone,
I wandered on, as in a dream,
Alone, yet not alone.

For softly breathing at my side
Two spirit-minions of time,
Close to my heart this morning tide
Sang in alternate rhyme.

The one a wingèd angel, through
The meadow meshes gaily stept,
And seemed to shift her tender hue
With clouds that overswept.

Yet never from my side she moved,
Chanting full loud of all she saw ;
Her name, the Present, and she loved
In sounds fair sights to draw.

Wingless her sister, and her face
Was pale with old life's weary heat,
Yet rich in many a loving grace,
And oh ! her smile was sweet.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

No veil she wore, her figured vest
Bright cherished portrait gems made fast,
Fresh rosemary lay on her breast,—
Her honoured name, the Past.

Now all they sang the way along
To tell it were no easy feat ;
So strangely intricate their song,
So blent the sad and sweet.

But this I own, to each full part
Such heavenly harmony was lent,
As left within my echoing heart
The music of content.

The Afterglow:

LII.

OLD AND NEW FRIENDS.

THE bright, the wise, the playful and the fair,
Oh, ruthless Time ! thou dost them all destroy,
Robbing our hearts as from a child its toy ;
And tho' thou lendest others, no compare
May love endure between the here and there.
The new coin savours not the ancient joy,
Its finest gold hath ever this alloy
That a fresh stamp and legend it must bear.
The rust and crust of each old flaw we knew,
And conscious that our own were nothing less,
Part of ourselves their imperfections grew.
Now thoughts of all such sympathies impress
More deeply old delights. Adieu, adieu !
Be ours the genuine coin in Heaven to re-possess.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

LIII.

INVITATION TO W. B. AND K. C. B.

COME, old friends, and tarry awhile,
Blood is warmer for shaking of hands ;
A golden gain is a true love smile,
And laughter easeth tightening bands.

Life is in autumn—the year is in May,
Long-tried hearts are mellow and sound ;
Open then forth in the blossoming day,
Let them flow like the wine around.

While there's sunshine, beauty,*and tune,
Never will we such gifts forego ;
After May comes flowery June,
After autumn, deadening snow.

Now, we'll twine the old and the new,
Strengthening faith as we love recall ;
Many long years we've been happy and true :
Here's joy for ourselves, and hope for all.

The Afterglow :

LIV.

INVITATION TO AN OLD FRIEND,
E. S. A.

COME, ere cruel autumn's blast,
With its dismal roar,
Summer's coronet hath cast
On our terrace floor ;

Ere the pale discrowned plants
Wither one by one,
And no bard their praises chants
Now their flowers are gone.

Come, ere dreary sights like these
Vex you on the way,
And you fancy every breeze
Sounds your own decay.

Still the sun with ruddy gleam
Mellows all the air,
Here where you may sit and dream
In the garden chair.

Dream, or talk of days bygone
With your oldest friend,—
Of hearts that beat and eyes that shone,
Loving to the end ;

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

Dear love, which, so enriching life,
Bequeaths undying bloom ;
No summer flower that heavenly power,
Victor of the tomb.

LV.

*“ WENT UP UPON THE HOUSE-TOP
TO PRAY.”*

BENEATH the silent stars, erect, alone,
Upon her castle's ample roof she stands,
With pale uplifted brow and clasping hands,
As tho' she questioned meekly, one by one,
Those eyes of other worlds which meet her own.
But soon on pinions of serene delight,
Her soul, borne upwards thro' the vaulted night,
Prostrate adores before the eternal throne ;
So in the service of those secret prayers
She mingles with the radiant host above ;
Now she descends the turret's winding stairs,
The joy of the fresh-gathered grace to prove,
For in the vase of her pure heart she bears
The golden dew of Heaven's protecting love.

The Afterglow :

LVI.

TO A LITTLE GIRL.

No alien from thy noble race
In tenderness to me,
Margaret ;—a blessing on the face
Of thy bright infancy !

For thou hast brought me fairest flowers,
And twined them in my vest,
That they may live their blooming hours
And die upon my breast.

I would to heaven that everything
Upon this heart of mine,
Dear child, had half as pure a spring,
As this sweet gift of thine.

All cradled in the kindly earth,
Nursed by the summer sun,
Nature presided at its birth,
With dewy benison.

Sweet, thornless, delicately fair,
A joy to all around,
Say, can there aught in earth or air,
Lovelier than this be found ?

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

Oh yes,—the artless elegance
Of thy untrammelled glee,
In all its radiant innocence,
Is lovelier far to me.

Earth were indeed like Eden blest
If thought thus undefiled,
Had for its type in every breast,
A flower from a child.

The Afterglow:

LVII.

OLD LETTERS.

A BOX of sweetest music is that case,
Filled with the song of those who sing no more,
Save in the records of this sacred store,
By their dear hand marks. Ah, what cherished
grace,
With pale-voiced echo floats across the space
Of time's encroaching sea, as slowly o'er
I turn the speaking paper, and restore
Love's fragments to their old familiar place !
Yet seldom have I needed to unfold
Those outer leaves which keep the thoughts
apart,
For mostly hath a glance my memory told
Of all within. So, like the electric smart,
Let but the hand the fading scripture hold,
And all its spirit rushes on the heart.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

LVIII.

TO MY BOOKS.

WITH unaffected gratitude I gaze
Around upon these silent sons of thought,
From time's far depths and far off regions
brought ;
Ready with many tongues and lore and lays
To minister to my capricious days !
Chambers with golden sentences enwrought,
They open liberal hearted soon as sought,
Nor claim nor need my inefficient praise.
Oh kind companions ! My mentors true,
My playmates, minstrels, mortal and divine !
I think he would die happier who knew
His thoughts, deposited in some small shrine
Like yours, should find a resting-place by you,
There with undying light, though faint, to
shine !

The Afterglow:

LIX.

TIME THE COACHMAN.

My Time is the prince of charioteers,
He goes by the sun alway ;
The steeds he steers are the seasoned years,
And he travels night and day.

He'll give or lend to foe or friend,
And his face foretells alarms ;
He puts us down at the Churchyard End,
Taking up at the Mothers' Arms.

His road's thro' a vale, the fares aver,
Up and down, between good and ill,
And they who go furthest in this concur,
That the close is all down hill.

See the chalks and the charcoals how they fly
'Neath the stormy sky or the blue ;
Come wet, come dry, with a song or a sigh,
Time's safe to pull us through.

And we rush with the greed of devouring speed,
For on every fresh birthday
He claps to his team an untried steed,
And away it is, away !

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

Mine are fifty and four, and soon one more,
How long since they seemed too few !
And some they are dark, and some they are fair,
But most of the piebald hue.

Now the pace grows a race, and at every slough
How creaks the old machine !
It calls for the sap of its youth, I trow,
And the strength which once hath been.

Its doom it will meet, whether tardy or fleet.
To dismount I must prepare.
E'en now I can trace, in no distant space,
The old yews sway in the air.

The Afterglow :

LX.

ON BEING ASKED TO TAKE A WALK ON A WINTER NIGHT.

WHAT if the sleepless moon disclose
The windings of the icy brook?
A richer scene the lamplight throws
Upon this rare enchanting book.

Pale is the gleam of distant stars
Fretting the sky with myths antique :
But ruddy red these flaming bars
Glow to the core of heart and cheek.

If fair the night, then thankful be :
"Twill guide the wanderer to his rest ;
If dark, still murmur not, for He
Who moves the storm-cloud judgeth best.

But tranquil thou within abide,
Enjoy life's salutary boon,
And leave the world's rheumatic side
To owls and minions of the moon.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

LXI.

THE DELIGHTS OF WINTER.

I LOVE old-fashioned winter days,
Whose bluff nor-westers snort and blow
A wholesome blessing in your face,
And set your nose and nerves aglow ;
Your cheeks bright double roses gain
As I look thro' my window pane.

And when the mute transforming snows
Make earth a shapeless polar bear,
I love to test its huge repose
By short-lived footprints here and there,
In fancy—as my eyes I strain
Thro' this protecting window pane.

And then to skim, with swallow's grace,
The glassy adamantine ice !
To glide and veer—and sway and race—
Oh glorious, glorious exercise !
As seen upon the flooded plain
Far flashing—thro' my window pane.

The Afterglow:

LXII.

OLD AND INCONSISTENT.

ALL cloudless is the sky,
And every wind is still.
Upon the breast of this bright hill
I could lie down and die.

O downy-fingered death !
Thou wilt not me surprise,
Closing my unreluctant eyes,
As flowers in twilight's breath.

Sere leaf in winter found,
I seem a thing for scorn,
So weak, and chilly, and forlorn,
I shiver on the ground.

My hopes have long left earth,
And make for joys above ;
Poised on the wings of faith and love,
They bide the glorious birth

Which wears no waning form,
Frail limb or clouding eye ;
Whose cradle is the spirit's sky
Above the flood and storm.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

Blest thought, how welcome now
This anodyne's descent !
O healer of all discontent
Thy hand is on my brow !

Ah how the air is sweet !
How cheery is the sun !
And I hear the pleasant rippling run
Of the brook beneath my feet ;

And the corncrake afar in the rye,
And the gossipping crows on the holt ;
And there laughs a whinnying colt,
And the bees are purring by ;

And I feel so warm and well ;
Thank God for the glowing day !
Here little Annie trips to say,
“ Hark to the dinner bell.”

The Afterglow:

LXIII.

MUSIC.

Now thro' the winding portals of the ears
Enters the long procession of sweet sound,
Fills the heart's chamber to its inmost bound,
And presses on the yielding gate of tears.
Ah ! where are bitterness, suspicion, fears ?
All the deep tides of harmony confound,
While young-eyed memories minister around
Cups from the vineyard of our early years.
The present is a dream,—future and past
Blend with each other in a morning haze,
And thro' the golden vapours wafted fast
I mount beyond the sphere of works and days,
Higher and higher ;—Paradise at last
Bursts on me, with a crash of glorious praise !

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

LXIV.

MUSIC.

WHEN the spirit, half in anger,
Owns the fretful nerves unstrung.
And an irritable languor
Clouds the brow and chains the tongue.

What can soothe? what power dispelling
Waft the sullen mists away,
Penetrate the heart's dark dwelling
And let in the joyous day?

Music claims the loving mission,
Music, sweet, sublime, and gay,
Irresistible magician,
Whom the dancing stars obey.

Every gloom the soul depressing
Is not Saul's malign despair,
Seek then Music's heavenly blessing,
Tho' no David's harp be there.

THE VOICE OF THE WATERFALL.

ALL among the mountains
Sitteth Arabel,
Listening to the fountains
From the rifted fell :
And she hears them quaintly sing,—
“ We our fairest flashes fling
Not for Kaiser nor for King,
But for those who love us best ;
Those whose hearts can weave a nest,
And brood in a delicious rest
On our gelid, mossy breast ;
Where the depths of dim seclusion
Blind the footsteps of intrusion
Up those labyrinthine ways
Only trodden by the fays,
Narrowing to the mystic cell,
Where the nymph invisible,
Ministers the gift divine
From her little silvery shrine.
There she with an ancient art
Melts the rugged mountain’s heart,
Singing of their joys and pains,
Singing of the suns and rains,

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

Singing of the old world years
Till all his wrinkles fill with tears.

There the wild flower blooms and dies,
Screened from envious human eyes;
For our bipeds are not men,
Only the stonechat and the wren,
Ouzel dark and halcyon blue
Flit our spangled rainbows thro':
Feather'd fairies, whose delight
Is to flirt our diamonds bright
From the shallow pools, and fling
Liquid sparks o'er head and wing.

Thus our winding watery glen
Hath a life unknown to men,
And the voice which chaunts its joys
Seems to many idle noise.

But to thee it is a psalm
From a spirit deep and calm,
As of maiden fair and holy,
Not elate nor melancholy,
Singing to her own young heart,
Tuneful faith her only art.

Every note is heavenly praise
Fit for happy Sabbath days !
And should unseen passer there
Catch the sweetness of the air,
He would feel perhaps as thou
Here upon this lonely brow,

The Afterglow:

Interpreting the fountain's lays
As a rich continuous praise,
 Echoed from rock and copse and sod,
Of Nature unto Nature's God.

LXVI.

SONGS OF NATURE.

THERE is no heart which never yet hath stirred
 The songs of Nature ; when thro' wintry bars
 The fettered winds are moaning to the stars ;
Or waves heave summer languor ; or sweet bird
Pipes love to all ; or brook nymph may be heard
 Far shimmering down the cleft of moorland
 scaurs,
With chaunt incessant ; or from purple cars
When at the mountain peaks loud thunders gird.
All move to sympathy, if not to faith :
 Wind, storm, and waterfall, and bird and sea :
All things at times with deep oracular breath,
 Half in clear strain, and half in mystery,
Singing themselves, their origin, and death,
 Inspire our hearts to join the harmony.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

LXVII.

SONG.

BETTER were mute the lyre,
With all its tuneful art,
Which cannot touch with fire
The garden of the heart.

Lighting up the pansies,
Roses, and passion-flowers,
Gemming with radiant fancies
The labyrinthine bowers.

Like the moan of the wind in waste places.
Like the song of the bird in deep night,
Like the dream of beloved faces
For ever passed from sight ;

Like marriage bells in the morning,
Like joyful news from home,
Like hymns from a great heart scorning
The petty rage of doom ;

Like the trump's defiant blare
Ere the battle has begun ;
Like the virgin's tender prayer
At the dying of the sun ;

The Afterglow:

Oh ! make me to muse or weep,
With thought, with phrase, with tone
Oh ! make me to laugh and leap,
Or leave me here alone.

LXVIII.

LIFE A DREAM.

SONG.

IN Youth's gay barge with roses crowned,
Careering on the flower-fringed stream,
All is so rich, and full, and sound,
Who ever called his life a dream ?

But when dark days and chill have frown'd,
And years of ice obstruct the stream,
'Tis then we cry, with wit profound,
“ Ah, what is life, but just a dream ? ”

And when death runs us all aground,
'Mid the last dribblings of the stream,
Youth, age, joy, sorrow, all are found
The echoes of a waking dream.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

LXIX.

A SONG OF LIFE.

Lo, a gleam along the sky,
And a gloom upon the hill ;
So around us low and high,
Coexist the good and ill.
Make the best of life, my friend,
All is chequered to the end.

Marvel at her greeting gay,
As she paces thro' the park ;
Care enough to turn them gray
Lurks behind those tresses dark :
For her lord she deems untrue,
And she only twenty-two !

Mark that tiny beggar elf !—
How his rags with laughter leap :
He hath gathered silver pelf
From the dusty wayside heap,
And his heart is in his eyes,
Flashing joy upon his prize !

The Afterglow :

Oh, life's weary, dreary play !
 Lovely lady feels, and sighs ;
Oh, the happy, jolly day !
 Grimy, tattered vagrant cries.
So unconscious, side by side,
 Joy and Sorrow run and ride.

Thus, my friend, for you and me,
 While the hours their changes urge,
In the dim futurity,
 Lurk, perhaps, the toy and scourge.
Baits for folly or despair,
 Let us then our hearts prepare.

Faith and Love must fate endure,
 Yet its issues may control ;
Strain the flood of pleasure pure,
 Sanctify thro' tears the soul !
Hold to Faith and Love, my friend,
 Joy unchequered crowns the end.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

LXX.

SONG FOR THE NATIVITY.

SONG.

Now should a heart be overcast,
Let faith the blessed texts recall,
Which tell of woe for ever past,
And love immortal all in all.

Oh, sing the song the angels sung,—
Of peace, and glory, and goodwill,
When the great sign in splendour hung
Above the shepherds on the hill.

Then haste to some poor sufferer's bed
With alms and consolation sweet,
There is thy Bethlehem—bow the head,
And worship at the Saviour's feet.

The Afterglow:

LXXI.

SONG FOR EASTER.

THE trifles which our hearts engage
We would not utter save in scorn ;
Yet we are Christ's dear heritage,
And this His Resurrection morn.

Leap up my heart and burst thy tomb,
God's spirit gives thee strength and wing ;
Shake off the grave-clothes, spurn the gloom,
And mount where blessed angels sing ;

Amid bright saints of all degrees,
Amid the martyrs' glorious show,
Amid all faithful hearts whose knees
With thine are bending here below.

The Hallelujah's noble breath
Scatters the dust of earth away,
And night and sorrow, sin and death,
Dissolve in everlasting day.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

LXXII.

SONG FOR ST. ALBAN'S DAY.

OUR own first martyr, pure and brave,
Dear life to-day for Jesus gave,
Rejoicing through the gory grave
To follow Him who died to save.

Amid the reckless jeering throng
His fettered limbs they hale along,
But freedom from his heart and tongue
Burst forth in faith's triumphant song.

The headsman heard the saintly sound,
And flung his axe upon the ground,
And 'mid the heathens raging round
Confessed the Lord with faith profound.

There, where their blood two martyrs poured,
Two souls to heavenly mansions soared ;
A holy minster crowns the sward,
And Christ for aye shall be adored.

O worthy of the palm and wreath !
O power of meek, enduring faith !
Which with its last expiring breath
Could win a soul from endless death.

The Afterglow :

And thus upon Saint Alban's day
We keep the feast, and sing and pray,
Till we no longer care to stay
From saints and martyrs far away.

Safe from the tyrant's axe and chain
May we the victim's faith retain,
Despite the cost or care or pain,
Confessing Jesus before men.

Confessing Jesus, Lord of love !
While daily fruits our homage prove ;
Jesus, round whom our spirits move,
Our Rock below, our Crown above.

LXXIII.

*AN OLD-FASHIONED SONG FOR
CHRISTMAS.*

'Tis merry at good old Christmas time,
When the Lord came down from high,
All heedless of the wintry rime,
In Bethlehem to lie.

'Tis merry for knight and knave and squire,
And merry for dames around the fire ;
" Then think of the poor," saith the white-headed
friar,

" For the sun rides round the world O !"

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

The great boar's head comes in with a song,
With chine and mustard and brawn,
And capon and geese and eels so long,
And fat that was once a fawn.

“ ‘Tis well,” saith the friar, “ for all at the board,
And well for those who come afterward ;
Then carve for the poor and say grace to the Lord,
For the sun rides round the world O !”

With your gingered ale and garophilack ;
Your claret and hypocras ;
Your cider, metheglin, and morat and sack
Brimming over your tankard and glass.
“ Hold hard,” says the friar, “ and drink not too
deep,
Lest the devil to-morrow should make you to
weep ;
Fill the poor man's can ere you go to sleep,
For the sun rides round the world O !”

“ Tis gay in the hall where the minstrels play
And chorus and carol resound :
But think how Christ in the manger lay,
While angels sang around.
“ Then oh !” says the friar, “ be merry and wise,
And pray for all ere you close your eyes ;
Christ died for the rich and the poor likewise ;
For the sun rides round the world O !”

The Afterglow :

LXXIV.

SINGING BY THE WAYSIDE.

A YOUTH, deep-eyed and slender of limb,
Leaped in the love of his peerless art ;
For he deemed with a madrigal, ode, or hymn,
To win to his will the human heart.

So he sat in pride by the worn wayside,
And poured out his soul to the passing throng,
Deeming of those who run or ride
The flower of all would hearken his song.

And cars and coursers they thundered by,
Wrapt in the earth-clouds we call dust :
But no one glanced with favouring eye,
Nor one a favouring hand out-thrust.

It was the morn of the yearly feast,
And loudly he sung as they hurried along :
“ Scholar and soldier and lover and priest,
Oh tarry and hear my genial song ! ”

Saith the priest, in a tone to bar dispute,
“ My time is due to the Abbey church ; ”
And the schoolmaster cried, with accent acute,
“ I haste to the mart to buy a birch.”

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

And lovers smiled and kissed their hands,
And merchants pointed to bag and box,
And soldiers strutted in clattering bands,
And the herdsman stared and goaded his ox.

And one there shouted, "Oh, read my tract!
The world will be ashes ere past a week;"
And some shook their heads, and said, "Sad fact,
The youth is a ne'er-do-well heathen Greek."

And a rich one threw him a shining piece,
Which the boys picked up with gibber and grin;
And a juggler offered his harp to lease,
Or himself and all for a harlequin.

So they mocked and passed, and his heart grew cold,
And his face wore the shadow of mute despair,
When there stood by his side, in glistening fold,
A bright-eyed maiden, blushing and fair.

"Oh sing to me, minstrel,—my heart is sore,
And song is the balm of the spirit's grief.
Oh sing me the sweetest of all your store,
To thee a delight and to me relief!"

So he sang her his sweetest, the lay of his heart,
In praise of sweet Minna betrothed his own;
And the maid stammered out, with a tremulous start,
"How happy is Minna!" and left him alone.

The Afterglow :

And alone he sate by the worn wayside,
Weary and thirsty and sick to the soul;
And he banned in the wrath of his mortified pride
Worldlings and world from pole to pole.

Then he strode away in the burning sun
To the roots of the mountain forest-clad,
Where the rocks close in all massy and dun,
And the fount is trilling its welcome glad.

He bathed his brow and he cooled his heat,
And he caught these words, 'mid the splash and
play :

“ Repose, O youth, at my shining feet,
And hear what the living waters say.

“ This word, great Nature, wise as old,
Tells to the heart which heeds her call :—
The needs of life are manifold,
And song is not the chief of all.

“ When first you thridded this rocky glade,
Little you recked of my tuneful strain,
So eager you were for the sheltering shade,
So greedy you were for my silver rain.

“ Yet ever you loved my music well,
And have lauded its lapsing monotone,
And with rapturous sounds you filled my cell,
Inspired, as you said, by me alone.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

“ But now,”—so the stream in its wisdom rolled,
 Singing ever and aye with its rhythmical fall,—
“ The needs of life are manifold,
 And song is not the chief of all.”

The youth arose, and thrice he bowed
 In homage due to the teaching fall,
Which still sang forth with refrain loud,
 “ And song is not the chief of all.”

And soon in the light of his Minna’s eye
 Wiser he courted, if less gay,
And sang with many a smile and sigh
 The simple song you hear to-day.

The Afterglow:

LXXV.

SONG.

TRICKLES fast the April shower
Like the maiden's tear,
In the tardy trysting hour,
And no lover near.

Joy, be sure, will soon return ;
See, out shines the sun !
Earth will bloom and cheeks will burn
With blushes many a one.

Heaven will bless the happy glow,
So the heart be true :
Sun and shower may flit and flow,
Love will shine all through.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

LXXVI.

A SPRING SONG.

I SAT beneath the Abeles old,
The meads were shot with green and gold,
And underneath my feet there rolled
 The little silvery Gad ;
The cuckoo and the thrush were singing,
The sheep bells on the hills were ringing,
 All life was gay and glad.

The busy babbling waterfall,
Melodiously kept time to all
The rich May music mystical,
 Toned to the fresh'ning air :
Each ripening bud that open flies
Seemed gasping with a gay surprise
 To greet a world so fair.

O lovely, lovely, lovely spring !
O robed in sunbeams !—bridegroom, king !
Breathe on my heart and bid me sing,
 Or rather praise and pray ;
For emblems are these sunny hours,
These golden meads, and stream and flowers,
 Of everlasting May.

The Afterglow :

LXXVII.

ANOTHER SPRING SONG.

THE spring so long remiss and coy,
So frost-bound, dumb and sad,
Now laughs aloud in sunny joy,
And cries to all, "Be glad!"

"We are! we are!" from heights of air
The rooks in chorus swell;
"We are!" the splashing frogs declare
From the deep orchard well.

A thousand birds from bush and ground
Each twitters for a nest,
"Lieder und Bilder," all around,
Oh exquisite unrest!

Dim trout are racing up the stream.
Mad hares across the glade,—
I heard the distant peacock scream.
The gaping asses brayed.

I hear the woodpecker's wild laugh,
The honey-bee's low horn;
An old man resting on his staff
Cries, "Here's a sweet spring morn!"

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

Two girls sit plaiting by the brook,
A rider on the way,
And each returns with brightened look,
“ Fine day, sir,—a fine day ! ”

O lovely day ! O pleasant earth !
Which God to us hath given,
Full of sweet life and love and birth,
O happy road to heaven !

Though love and birth must yield to death,
”Twill be a blest exchange,
Which amplifies all light and breath
With an eternal range.

LXXVIII.

*IN A WOOD IN THE MONTH OF
MAY.*

THIS is the heart and home of lovely spring ;
Here where I rest, as in its hour of prayer
The weary soul ; all round beech columns fair
Raying in aisles interminable fling
The shadows of their groining arms, and swing
Bright budding knops against the tender air ;
While from tree-crest and ground, and every
where
The glades with exquisite bird music ring.
Angels it may be in some golden grove
Sing thus to the redeemed in Paradise ;
A childish thought ;—and yet to those who love,
These birds are angels, and their melodies
With an instinctive charm our beings move
Heavenward in hymns of ecstasy to rise.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

LXXIX.

SUMMER GARDEN SONG.

OH, mellow sun ! oh, sweet south wind !
Which ruffling all the pansies
With loving touch wakes up the mind
To pleasant summer fancies.

As here upon this bevilled ring,
Which clasps the lilyed pool,
I lean and meditate, and sing
In Nature's flowery school.

While the great sun's maturing gold
Pours on the sloping corn
In its profusion manifold
The fulness of life's horn.

Of God's blest Spirit o'er the heart,
Not alien to His grace,
These summer breezes play the part,
Quicken, but nought displace.

See how that bright-eyed bird alone
Revels in silence gay,
His songs all sung and love-tasks done
In summer's holiday.

The Afterglow :

She nods, she skips, like merry child
She clears the bordering green ;
Nor fawn nor pard in park or wild
Hath limbs so lithe and clean.

She works the work her Lord assigns,
Rejoicing as she goes,
Her life between its narrow lines
With happy instinct flows.

She glads herself, she glads my sight ;
Oh, teacher true as small !
They trebly please who work aright,—
God, and themselves, and all.

LXXX.

*LOOKING ON AT A FÊTE IN THE
RUINS OF BERKHAMSTEAD
CASTLE.*

COME and sit on the golden ground,
All beneath us is soft and dry,
Life's rich wine is sparkling round,
Drink it in with cordial eye.

Arm-in-arm go maiden and youth,
Children dance around mother and sire ;
Bless their happiness, love and truth !
For the old heart glows at the young heart's fire.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

Here smiles beauty, life's sweet rose,
There rings music, gayer than birds,
With a stream of delight thro' the heart it flows,
Singing its song unspoilt by words.

Echo answers from yonder wall,
Echo crouching beneath the trees,
Pelting with her melodious ball,
Quaintest of Nature's mysteries.

Rifted ruin with sunburnt face
Glaring out from the bosky green,
Stranger eyes cannot read a trace
Of what thy fame in its strength hath been.

Keep, or bower, or holy chapelle,
Who may venture thy name to say ?
All but a shapeless crumbling shell,
Time's long waves have fretted away.

Yet stood the Abbot among these stones,
And his loyal heart beat high to hear
The Norman's oath on the sainted bones,
Priest and warrior crowding near.

Little we reek of abbots to-night,
Or of the Conqueror stern and stark,
Holiday hearts from their chambers bright
Laugh at memories grim and dark.

The Afterglow:

Still to confront the “then” with the “now,”
Dead old horror with living glee,
Smooths a line on the thinker’s brow,
Crowns the calm content of the free.

Smiles above us God’s bright sky,
Friends rejoice amid kith and kin,
We fear no ban, no laws defy,
Dumb for aye is the curfew’s din.

Only evening, warder grey,
Bars the golden gates of the sun,
Scattering dews over sward and spray,
Sighing to tell us day is done.

Dance then, children, while you can ;
Whisper, lovers, ere you part ;
Short is life, but shorter the span
Of summer joy to the human heart.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

LXXXI.

MAIDEN'S FLOWER SONG.

ALL day I wear a flowery crown,
Flowers, only flowers :
At night by flowers I lay me down ;
 Oh, the sunny hours !
Breadth of angels, hues of heaven
Surely to the flowers are given ;
 Bring more flowers.

Now my head is golden gay ;
Flowers, only flowers :
Soon it will be shot with grey ;
 Oh, the sunny hours !
Little skills the changing hair,
Grieving never cured a care ;
 Bring more flowers.

Tell me not that I must go ;
Flowers, only flowers :
When the flowers no longer blow ;
 Oh, the sunny hours !
For the soul will shine on high,
Crowned with star flowers in the sky ;
 Bring more flowers !

The Afterglow :

LXXXII.

FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST OF JUNE.

UP ! my dreamer, put on your head !

Blow your fancy-fed flowers away,
This is a genial earth we tread,
This is summer's longest day.

Fairer than all your fairest dreams,

Visions are rife in the woods above,
Where in the golden tremulous gleams
Flutter blackbird, throstle, and dove.

Now every sound and scent is sweet,

'Mid limes and linnets the south wind veers;
The round oak root shall be our seat,
With its welded rings of a thousand years.

Startled rabbits shoot by like light,

Squirrels peep from the grey forked ash,
While the ruddy woodpeckers laugh from the
height,
'Mid the hum of the bees, and the butterfly's
flash.

Open your eyes—unseal your ears

For the sights and the sounds of the longest
day ;

Soon may follow silence and tears,—

Come to the sweet summer woods away.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

LXXXIII.

SONG FOR MARRIAGE.

WHEN heart heart touches, when spirits clasp,
Mute fires unknown thus flames outreach,
New power is in the manly grasp,
New suasion in the maiden's speech.

So shy, so silent, so cold and calm,
In the fair plant still life we saw :
Now all is burgeoning, bloom and balm !
Oh, bless with me love's genial law !

Out well deep sympathy's rich delights,
Freed by the sun of kindling eyes ;
They might have slept thro' life-long nights,
All vainly stirred by lonely sighs.

New instincts holy, new hopes and zests
Flash into life from side to side :
Join, join pure fires, O loving breasts !
Your dross will minish, your gold abide.

The Afterglow :

LXXXIV.

SONG.

We'll count by joys our time on earth,
By flowers of spring and summer meads,
By winters rich in Christmas mirth,
And autumns strewing golden weeds.

The suns which dim in tears arose,
We need not chronicle I trow,
The memory of departed woes
We cannot, if we would, forego.

The sunniest spirits they can gloom,
And cut their names on breasts of stone ;
We'll leave them in their distant tomb !
The heart may weep o'er these alone.

But here with thee, when memories add
The sunshine of the past to this,
Oh it would be but idly sad
To thwart with shades our present bliss.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

LXXXV.

A HARVEST SONG FOR MYSELF.

Lo, God hath set my days,
These latter days in a garden ground :
In the midst my heart like a fountain plays
Unseen of the forest around :
Yet I fain would bless with its singing cheer
The slip of the earth which curveth anear.

So I have not done with the world :
Tho' you call me elder, and think me dry ;
Yet my leaves are not all unsurled,
And the joy of my heart and eye
Hath still a bud and a flower to show,
Tho' the colour be faint, and the scent come
slow.

And what of the world afar ?
Great flashes of glory thro' God's deep words,
And Christ's dear love, and the inner jar
Of the flesh and the spirit's swords,
And the hollow joys that burst at our feet,
And the million systems incomplete,

The Afterglow :

And the craving we cannot tame,
For the prize men rush at thro' blood and tears.
Christ's heaven or the heathen's fame,
The hopes too large for years ;
Some star for a home whose lights defy
The clouding of time and of destiny.

Oh, preacher, what more can you tell
Than God's brief word, tho' you hammer your
text,
Like an ante-diluvian shell,
Polished and filed and vext ?
Of its full fresh splendour we mourn at the loss,
All dimmed with the dross of your comment
and gloss.

Less talk, more prayer, more love !
Oh, think of the heavenward call,
And the grace of the Paraclete free from above,
And Jesus Lord of all,
Who offered in agony life and limb,
That we might for ever live with Him

By the river and tree of life,
With its perfect fruits that ripen and glow
'Mid the leaves with omnipotent healing rife,
Balm for the nations below :
And the song of the spirits in whose mild eyes
The lights of old love we recognize.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

Brim up life's bowl with these,
These sound heart-wines, they will make you
glad,

Then come all glowing beneath the trees
And plan for the sick and the sad :
Of all God-service the marrow and bone
Is pure man-service of love alone.

Adore 'mid the flowers and the fields,
In the deep green wood beneath the squirrel's eye,
And now not least when the golden yields
Acre to acre stand high,
When love is abroad on his summer wings,
And the valley beneath him laughs and sings.

So heaven will be in your heart,
For the Spirit of God is there :
And the whole shall dwell in that one small part,
Nor the faithful philosopher stare :
For he that loveth and serveth aright,
Aye bears in himself the infinite.

The Afterglow:

LXXXVI.

AN AUTUMN SONG.

O SAD sweet voice of the golden Fall,
Thou bearest a message from heaven to all,
And the spirits of purity, health, and love,
Seem wafted with thee from a source above.

From the trees of my grove with a musical sway,
They swirl all the dank dead leaves away ;
So sin and its sorrow in psalms depart,
'Mid the breathings of grace from a penitent's
heart.

It seemed so cruel to strip and to strew
Those pomps in their saffron and scarlet hue,
But we know how their festering blight would
cling
And poison the blessings of summer and spring.

'Tis thus that our merciful Father destroys
The gloss and the glare of corrupting joys,
And strips from the heart all glittering things
Which would fetter to earth her aspiring wings.

LXXXVII.

WAITING FOR THE SUN.

I SAT upon the narrow stairs
Which from my study window run,
Amid the placid summer airs,
And waited for the sun.

The flowers, tho' folded from the north.
With unlit dews were limp and cold :
Beyond the fence the grass sloped forth
Its green without the gold.

Oh, sun ! I cried, shine out and bless !
Oh, sun ! earth's clouded heart relieve !
We weary of this pilgrim's dress,
This grey from morn to eve.

For generous glowing light we pray
To flood the vapour from our eyes :
Bright wine of heaven upon life's way—
Foretaste of Paradise.

The Afterglow :

LXXXVIII.

SUNSET IN AGE.

THE disc hath touched, and earth, which lay so
cold,

Leaps into throbbing splendour from her
trance ;

Her hills breathe fire, her clods are sparry gold,
From every bush flame-hearted rubies glance.

Old transformation ! most familiar joy !

Yet ever robed in floods of rich surprise.

How have I loved them, man and youth and boy,
These moments of a transient Paradise !

And now they flash ineffable delight :

Now that life's star is waning chill and low.

Glory and love they symbol to my sight

In hues of heaven, and make me long to go.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

LXXXIX.

“ Ite tamen lachrymæ ! purum colis æthera Damon.”

Alas ! we cannot keep
Our dearest and our best :
In turn they fall asleep,
And mingle with the rest :
Yet wherefore should we weep
When they are with the blest ?
And time, whose gentle heat
Absorbs, but never sears,
Fosters all flowers that meet
Around the source of tears ;
And sorrow becomes sweet
Thro’ the ripening of the years.
Our flowers are faith and love,
Reverence, tender memories bright,
And their growth is of a grove,
Springing, spreading day and night ;
And they wave the tomb above,
And they hide it from our sight.
So for ever blooms the past,
And the parting we forget,
Till our fading eyes we cast
On the light which soon must set ;
And our flowers are woven fast
In a deathless coronet.

The Afterglow:

XC.

SONG.

OH, what we have loved we love for ever,
And its life is the light of these lower ways;
It flows thro' the heart like a singing river,
It swells with the tears of darker days,
But fills all the past with a golden haze.
Oh, what we have loved we love for ever !

And what from our love this love shall sever?
Afar from the earth and its evil eye,
It dwells in the glorious light of its Giver,
It dwells with all spirits pure on high,
Waiting to clasp our hearts when we die.
Oh, what we have loved we love for ever !

XCI.

SONG.

HE called to the Past, "Come back !"
But she shook her golden hair,
And smiled from the brink of the torrent black
Which never bridge might bear.

Of the Future, thro' haze and rack
He asked, "Art thou as fair?"
There came a sigh down the ancient track,
And a shriek, "forbear—forbear!"

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

XCII.

SONG.

THE cup of love he spurned,
And dashed it to the ground :
The wine, to serpents turned,
Rose hissing all around.

They rose in coiling rout
Up to his heart that day :
They sucked the life-blood out,
And left the churlish clay.

XCIII.

SONG.

HE heard a strain of flowing joy,
His easy heart forgot its years,
And with the pulses of a boy
Leaped over memory's gulf of tears ;

Into a dear familiar place,
Where gleamed the moonshine full and low.
Upon a gentle loving face,
The spell of many years ago.

All in a moment ceased the stave,
The tender vision passed away ;
The sun shone on a grassy grave
As he had seen it yesterday.

The Afterglow :

XCIV.

SONG.

WHEN joy has flashed its brightest hue
And sorrow breathed her saddest strain,
As from a mount life's path we view,
And dream again—and dream again.

Here glimmers childhood's echoing vale,
And there is youth's delicious plain ;
And as each well-known point we hail
We dream again—we dream again.

'Tis here a kiss, and there a sigh,
Those shadowing elms a tomb contain ;
We muse on loving heart and eye,
And dream again—and dream again.

Only the last expiring breath
Blurs all the tender landscape o'er ;
Only when memory dies in death,
We dream no more—we dream no more.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

xcv.

SONG.

I CANNOT sing the coming days :
 My heart is with the past,
Among those after-glowing rays,
 No night shall overcast.

Tho' dim to you their tender light,
 For me it weaves a dome.
Where loving forms in raiment bright
 From the far old life come.

That old Arcadian life we played,
 Now but a golden dream,
With many a happy boy and maid
 By youth's melodious stream.

These all to death and age belong :
 I pause upon the track,
And round my heart with simple song
 Call the dear spirits back.

The Afterglow :

XCVI.

FAREWELL.

FAREWELL, dear love ! it seems but madness
That words which bless thee, life and soul,
Should bring to me no sound but sadness,
No thought but of the deepest dole.

But holy love scorns such depressing,
And flings to folly her despair,
For if with thee goes every blessing,
My heart is with thee all to share.

XCVII.

To the

*MEMORY OF ONE who had ALWAYS
A CHEERFUL COUNTENANCE.*

ERE crowned, from out this earthly war,
Thy Master bid thee come,
Near His white throne a radiant star
He kindled for thy home.

Its beams upon that heart of thine
Descended day and night :
These made thy pleasant face to shine
With happy holy light.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

XCVIII.

TO E. B. B. IN MEMORIAM.

AND thou hast winged thy tuneful way
 To the celestial quire,
Thou whom Cecilia taught to play
 On Sappho's burning lyre !

Now over human sins and woes
 Thy tears no more shall fall,
For round thy head the aureole glows
 Whose light revealeth all.

The Afterglow:

XCIX.

*IN MEMORY OF THE REV. F. B.,
WHO DIED AGED XXVII.*

So young, so young ! three decades incomplete,
He bore the cross along life's miry ways
In cheerful lowliness, not heeding praise,
And winged with prayer his undefiled feet ;
Not resting, save to comfort and to greet
The poor dark wanderer, and the abject raise :
Passing the world's bright toys without amaze.
O guileless faithful spirit, brave and sweet !
May be thy briefer transit now hath won
The prize of longest travail, and shall prove
Rich mercy to some weakness here unknown.
Or may be that thy Sovereign Lord above
Hath work for such as thou art near His throne :
Some office unrevealed of higher love.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

C.

ON THE POET WALLER.

WITH flowing wit our Edmond's song is rife :
Rich in court grace, but free from all its strife ;
Still in his nobler strains one might desire
More stately force and more melodious fire.
Ah ! gentle Muse, and purer than thine age,
Gay without vice, without presumption sage,
I bow and thank thee,—nor would dare to frown
On Phœbus in court dress or morning gown !

*ON HEARING THAT THE QUEEN
HAD RECEIVED COMFORT FROM
TENNYSON'S LINES ON THE
PRINCE CONSORT, 1862.*

WHEN that the Laureate, 'mid a nation's woe,
Toned forth his sympathy in noble heat
Tempered with tears, in tears we rose to greet
Him, whom our hearts had crowned so long ago,
Now recognized by all in the full flow
Of that majestic solace which complete,
Pealed like a psalm, sublime, prophetic, sweet,
Allaying thus the universal throe.
Light of our land, whose deep eclipse doth
move
These present tides of sorrow dark and strong,
O widowed Queen ! now doth thy soul
approve
Such balms as rarely to thy state belong :
Tears of a people's undissembled love,
And heaven-taught comfort of thy Laureate's song.

*ON HEARING THAT WORDSWORTH
DID NOT APPRECIATE
“SCOTS WHA HAE WI’ WALLACE
BLED.”*

OH, not philosophy's didactic train
Of measured thought to harmony sedate
Attuned in modulations intricate
We need, to set afire the heart and brain,
Witness Tyrtæus, witness Körner's strain.
And Burns, inciting with a fiery hate
His Caledonians to their gory fate,
I never heard, but my heart throbbed again,
And my nerves felt the challenging pipes call,
And clashing of claymores, and thundering tread,
Till lost in smoke and hurling battle brawl,
Not ceasing till the night drooped overhead.
Then all was silence—not a foot did fall—
And the stars glared upon the stiffening dead.

MOULSOE PARSONAGE.

OH, modest Parsonage, from the lingering rise,
Shining unconscious beacon down the vale,
And open to the breath of every gale
From the sweet south!—how have my boyish
eyes
Fed on your landscape, when with rapt surprise
I counted, leaning on the garden rail,
Church, hall, or homested on each slope and
dale,
Up to the ridging groves that tuft the skies.
Since then what wondrous scenes my steps
have sought,
In the far lands of beauty and of light;
Great Rome's seven hills and Zion's holy Court!
Yet still the memory of that young delight
Comes nestling to my heart with many a thought
Of the old happy days and those who made
them bright.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

CIV.

*TO COLONEL SIR PROBY CAUTLEY,
K.C.B., ON THE OPENING OF THE
GANGES CANAL.*

More than one decade of thy vigorous age,
Oh, heaven-born engineer! on Gunga's plain,
Midst withering heat and pestilential rain,
Thou gav'st, with nature glorious war to wage,
And win a name in history's bloodless page.

For thou hast tamed the desert, and thy pain
Shall wring from fruitless sands the genial grain,
And quench in living streams pale famine's rage.

Oh, when amid the nations' thundering peal
Those volumed waters writhed beneath thy sway,

Did not contrasting memory then reveal
The garden brook, home of thy first essay,
The mimic sluice, and fairy waterwheel,
And those mild eyes which blest thy thoughtful
play?

The Afterglow:

CV.

*TO JOHN RUSKIN, ESQ.,
AFTER READING THE "SEVEN
LAMPS OF ARCHITECTURE."*

RUSKIN, I hear the taunts of rigid men,
As though some blatant charlatan wert thou ;
Nor may the tongue truth-telling disavow
The inconsistent ardours of thy pen
And raving storms unjustified ; as when
Thou could'st great Zampieri so revile,
And him of soft Lorraine, and mad'st us smile
At frantic eulogies all but profane.
Yet these are motes ;—a thousand thanks we
breathe
To him who won the unobservant eye,
Painting the changeful heavens and all beneath
In coloured words of genuine Rubens' dye.
Around thy "Lamps" fantastic smoke may
wreath,
But in the dust their light shall never lie.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

CVI.

*TO AMERICANS WHOM I HAVE
KNOWN.*

HAIL, kinsmen of the West! No purer hearts
Beat in our island home ; nor minds more clear
Track out great Nature's truths from sphere to
sphere,
And crown her beauty with ingenious arts.
Ever your freshness quickening light imparts
To thought, while candour dissipates all fear,
And open hand, kind tongue, or generous
tear,
From its reserve the stranger's will disparts.
Dear are your names of patriot and sage :
My childhood kindled at their memory ;
Your poet's song hath cheered my every age,
And, as I scan this latest history,
Sublime appears the patriotic rage
Which bled for Freedom and for Unity.

HAMLET.

HEREIN the giant poet's art we see,
Who doth his harp of human passions make
And from its compass wondrous music shake,
Mounting to half-scared folly's quavering key
Up from the deepest bass of villany.
And when in other hands the ear would quake.
Fearful of discord, he doth then outbreak
In cunningest triumphant harmony.
Oh what a flight is this ! through woe and sin,
Lust, phrenzy, death, now blending, now alone,
Mid wrath's remorse too late, and combat's din !
Then for a burden true love's swan-like moan !
Then, strangest chord, philosophy peals in,
With full clear tones, but ah ! too swiftly gone.

THE DEAD LONG AGO.

WHERE are the unforgotten, whose young love
Is memory's fragrant joy? What are they now,
Those early blooms of many a sunlit bough,
Neath which we nestled in life's morning grove?
Still seem they near, when shine the stars above;
Still in our hearts reflected, a bright row,
Each voiced with its old sweetness, singing low.
Still smile their loving eyes, their lips still move
Heart portraits, stars, and echoes! Oh rich store!
Oh shadows eloquent of high estate!
For hope of which the present we leap o'er,
Yearning the issues to anticipate,
When all, transfigured to new love, adore,
And shining sing, and singing shine, elate!

The Afterglow :

*

CIX.

OBLIVION.

Sometimes, oh stream ! thou dearer art to me
Than storied Tiber or the castled Rhine,
Gorge-cleaving Danube, or our pastoral Nine,
Oh deep Oblivion, flowing to no sea !
Would that thy waves' up-bearing power might be
Less, for, alas ! I mark the sloughy shine
Upon thy surface of old cares of mine,
Which long ago I thought dissolved in thee.
But ah ! what poisoning rubbish o'er thy brink
Have I not hurled ! Black dreams, affronts,
and fears,
And of my sorrows all that time could sink
Thou hast engulfed, absorbing bitterest tears !
And so I praise thee : but I may not drink ;
Such wealth is mine of thoughts from happy
years.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

CX.

THE PAST VIEWED IN AGE.

DOWN the dim vale from age's tottering seat
I see, where memory cleaves the misty years.
Here, wars and revolutions, triumphs, tears
Of nations and of men ; there, home-views sweet,
Where smile the dead, where friends and lovers
greet.
Lo ! first and last, lo ! ecstasies and fears,
Successes, failures, cradles, rings, and biers,
And chequered lives within mine own complete !
Yet as in sunset, when low lights invest
The spreading landscape, some fantastic knoll,
Or golden creek, or belfry's glowing crest
Fastens the unconscious eye : so will the soul
Above the tomb of one deep passion rest,
Till tears, maybe, obliterate the whole.

The Afterglow :

CXI.

ABOVE KINGLEY BOTTOM, SUSSEX.

OH haunted hollow of the lonely down,
Upon thy windy lip once more I stand,
And map-like view bright ocean's winding
strand,
And the "fair island" paling in the frown
Of mists, and city with aspiring crown.
Lo, at my side three grassy tombs! What
hand
Reared these?—for whom?—from a far
northern land,
For steel-clad sea-kings, warriors of renown.
Nor history tells more, nor the underground
Oft questioned of the dust in yonder grave;
But solemn clouds at the fierce north wind's
sound
Drop shadowy palls, and the long grasses wave,
And thro' the storm the curlews wheeling
round
Sea-dirges shriek above the nameless brave.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

CXII.

IN KINGLEY BOTTOM, SUSSEX.

OH haunted hollow of the pastoral wold,
I leave the ridges of thy windy lip,
And downward, downward creep with pause
and slip
To the green circus which thy steeps enfold,
Around the yew-tree grove so dark and old.
No wind is here, no sound but tinkling drip
Of berry or sere spray which time may strip,
Strewing with slow-won spoil the twilight mould.
Oh lonely golden dell ! oh wondrous wood !
Deep in the hoary past, who visits thee
Dreams how beneath the oak grey Druids
stood
White-robed, and woad-stained warriors bowed
the knee ;
So his heart blesses thee for three-fold good :
Beauty, and solitude, and mystery,

The Afterglow :

CXIII.

THE PROSPECT.

LOOK ! how fairly the prospect smiles !

Wood-crowned fallow, and low green leas !

And the sky, with its traversing sunny isles,

And the delicate choir of the birds and the
breeze.

And fair it hath been long years ago

To thousands asleep on the lethal shore,

Old-fashioned hearts of high and low,

Which beat to the tunes we sing no more.

And fair it will be, and we underground,

For the lamp of God's love hath no decay ;

Only we moths that flutter around

Glimmer unsteadily waning away.

CXIV.

THE OLD SKETCHER'S DREAM.

HE climbed a hill with panting pain,

He felt his weary days were done ;

He saw across the world's wide plain

The melancholy setting sun.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

A valley trended far away
Beneath him in a golden glow,
And there his life-long sketches lay,
Unrolled in one promiscuous show.

Incongruous in their site and size,
Yet true to memory every one ;—
Wide-stretched beneath his wondering eyes
The incoherent life-chart shone.

There yellow Egypt's palmy Nile,
And there was Sinai's shattered crest,—
A cottage home, a churchyard stile,
And cypress groves where heroes rest,

Bright belfries there, and lone cascades,
Castle and heath and shadowing pine,
Ocean's deep blue, and colonnades,
And rocky tombs of Palestine.

Vases in flowery gardens stood,
And gleaming domes flashed back the sun,
And oaks, grey Druids of the wood,
And brooks in golden network spun.

But now from earth the mists arose :
Purpling the plain they climb the hill,
And shadows of the great repose
Seemed mantling o'er him, dark and chill.

The Afterglow :

He set his back against the west,
To mark where life's last glance would roam,
And far away it seemed to rest
Upon his little native home.

The low verandah sparkled bright,
Dear forms were thronging round the door,
Each in a robe of starry light—
He woke in joy and dreamed no more !

CXV.

CLOUDS AT NOON.

How have ye marred the morning sun,
Ye treacherous clouds of noon !
Ah ! thus are early hopes foredone
In youth's capricious June.

Foredone, dissolved, all dark and dead,
Their grave the secret heart ;
And thrc' long years the gloom they shed
We think will ne'er depart.

Yet ere the chequered daylight cease,
Raised is the cloudy pall,
And in a flood of golden peace,
Calm sunset blesses all.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

CXVI.

THE PICTURE.

DISTANCE.

O'ER the purple mountain peaks
Pile the storm-clouds wild and dun,
Looming over fiery streaks,
Canopy of dying sun.

MIDDLE DISTANCE.

Rounding ridge of shadowy brown,
Moorland this and forest old,
Whence the torrent, rippling down,
Calms itself in lurid gold.

FOREGROUND.

Auburn-tressed, by balustrade,
Golden harp upon her knee,
Paint in dovelike grey the maid
Dreaming less of all than thee.

The Afterglow :

CXVII.

THE TWO SUNSETS.

1.

PROUD Rhoda smiled from her latticed bower
As the summer sun went down ;
For a blush like her own lit the old white tower,
Tho' a cloud hung above like a frown.
She was strong in the power of her beauty's hour.
The power of a smile and a frown.

2.

Sad Rhoda sighed in her latticed bower,
As the winter sun went down ;
Like a shrouded ghost stood the old white tower,
And a cloud hung above with a frown ;
Gone was the power of her beauty's hour,
The power of a smile and a frown.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

CXVIII.

*JENNY LIND AT THE HARVEST-
HOME FEAST.*

THE village rang with happy rout,
As gaily we set forth ;
The winds that blew the flags about
Were neither east nor north.

It was the joyous harvest-home ;
But once a year its fall,
When cheery neighbours trooping come,
From cottage, farm, and hall.

On wreath and ribbon and sweet rose
Glances the sunny morn,
And every cap and bonnet shows
Its flowers and ears of corn.

From out the belfry arches old
The peals ring up to heaven ;
It seemed a fair where nought was sold,
But blessings freely given.

Now soon the sturdy hinds, between,
The vicar and the squire,
Pass reverently the church within,
Led by the village choir ;

The Afterglow :

Where, garlanded by pious art,
 Hung many a fruit and flower:
Symbol to every grateful heart,
 Of loving bounteous power.

All thro' the nave, with voices loud,
 The ready chant they raise ;
Nor silent is the standing crowd,
 High swells the hearty praise.

Then hushed is all,—save him alone,
 Whose apostolic call
Summons before the secret throne,
 To lead the prayer of all.

The preacher next our souls uplifts—
 He speaks of bliss to come,
When crowned are all the Spirit's gifts,
 In Heaven's bright harvest-home !

And so the ancient service sped ;
 But, ere the flock withdrew,
A voice that might have charmed the dead
 Rose from the organ pew.

It filled the pointed arch's splay,
 It smote the high roof-stone,
As heavenward it would force its way,
 In rapture all alone.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

A fount of melody, whose showers,
In wondrous rise and fall,
Startled amid the fruits and flowers
The ravished hearts of all,

They float, they soar on winged sounds
Of mercy, grace, and love,
They seem o'erpassing earthly bounds
To breathe the heaven above.

That clarion call to gratitude,
That loving lingering tone,
Vibrates thro' all the quickened blood,
Melts every heart to one.

They drop their heads, that rustic throng.
For tears they cannot stare,
They feel as tho' the enchanter's song
Upheld them in the air.

And if they thought an angel sung
They had not surely sinned ;
For she who owned that heavenly tongue
Was just sweet Jenny Lind.

L'ENVOI.

The organ ceased, her eyes fell down,
I marked her as she knelt and prayed,
Whom kings and czars had loved to crown,
Meek as a village maid.

The Afterglow:

And she, whose power, from pole to pole,
Had charmed the peevish critic's ear,
Melts with a psalm the ploughboy's soul,
And thanks him for his tear.

To help the poor, to help each heart
To rise to Him her soul adores,
The riches of her glorious art
Without a stint she pours.

Her earnest grace wore no display,
Only her yellow ringlets told
Of fjord and mountain far away
In the dear home of old.

Now that in England's garden ground
Her heart hath built its holy nest,
May she with earth's best flowers be crowned
Who hath so many blest.

And when at last our Saviour King
Reveals His new eternal sphere,
May she among the angels sing,
And we be there to hear !

CXIX.

FATHER ISIDORE.

“ SAY, who shall first this life-chain burst,
And reach the unknown shore ?
Or Hal, or I, or wanton Guy,
Or Father Isidore ?

“ He hath a blue and churchyard hue,
His years are twice our sire’s,
Like a skull, I trow, his bald bleached brow,
His eyes are dying fires.

“ I see him tottering to the shrine,
Along the yellow shore,
His steps are slow, he stoops full low,
Poor Father Isidore !

“ Our breath is long, our voices strong,
Our limbs as the wild buck free ;
We’ll pledge from the heart ere we depart
Long life to the jovial three ! ”

The moon held up her golden cup,
To cheer the fainting day,
And all the while her siren smile
Entranced the quiet bay.

The Afterglow:

They leap on board—with creaking cord,
Slow flaps the wide latteen ;
There's not a breeze from plain or trees,
Nor ripple to be seen.

With sheets belayed their course they made,
'Mid many a reckless joke,
Till night steals on, and one by one
Sleep folds them in his cloak.

But soon, alas ! the mountain pass
Upon the windward lies,
The deep ravine the cliffs between,
Whose heads are in the skies.

The wild white squall, with deadly fall,
Shrieks tearing thro' the dark ;
With sudden heel and upturned keel
Down sinks the fatal bark.

Hal and Guy in the deep sea lie,
One corse was tossed ashore.
Who read o'er its grave the holy stave ?
'Twas Father Isidore.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

CXX.

THE SHADOW.

A MONK looked forth from the castle gate,
Over the narrow vale,
The night was still, the hour was late,
And the moon rose large and pale.

The moon rose large above the height,
Where the path glanced by the wood,
The monk, he looked against the light,
He looked for the leech so good.

For the baron was ill—and the baron grew worse,
Lonely and old was he,
And a fear had taken both monk and nurse,
And the heir was beyond the sea.

Now the monk was aware of a dark rider,
With the moon at his back like a targe :
His lance rose high against the sky,
And he loomed both long and large.

No tramp was heard,—was it dust that stirred
In rolling clouds around ?
At every shoot of the charger's foot
Rose blackness from the ground.

The Afterglow:

Now near and near—doth he disappear
In the ford of the running stream?

No—vague and strange, with shadowy change
He rises like a dream.

All spiked against the clear night sky
His crownèd head is seen,
And the pennon which floats from his lance so
high
Is a flame of livid green.

Such dreary shade on the wall is made
When a man-at-arms stands by,
On castle-tower, at the midnight hour,
From cresset flaming high.

The air was cold, the monk was old,
He fell like a stricken corse,
And o'er him passed with chilling blast
The rider and the horse.

And on and on by bridge and bar,
By the hall of the marble floor,
On, on they fare, up the broad oak stair,
Right to the sick man's door.

Not then, indeed, was reined the steed,
But the rider stooped him low,
As the pennon bright in ghastly light
Swept o'er the baron's brow.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

Then away with a frown—and the moon sank
down,

And the lights went one by one.

Save the corse-flame now on the dead man's
brow,

Black darkness reigned alone.

What breaks the silence of the grave ?

Who shouts at the silent gate ?

'Tis the leech so brave who comes to save,

But ah ! he comes too late.

He came too late for the baron old,

All but for the monk and the nurse ;

And ere they died each groaned and cried,

“ 'Twas the shadow of the curse ! ”

The Afterglow :

CXXI.

BLACK GODEFROY.

“FETCH down my cloak and rapier, boy ;
Fetch down the postern key ;
I go to meet Black Godefroy,
Who waits me by the sea.

“And tell your lady, staring boy,
I do what she has done ;—
I go to meet Black Godefroy
At setting of the sun.”

He strides adown the marble stair,
Loud clangs the postern door ;
Thro’ street and gate, and foul and fair,
He seeks the lonely shore.

There like a pillar, dark and high
Against the rising moon,
With folded arms, stands Godefroy,
And hums a wanton tune.

“Now hold,” he says, “and hear my tale,
Gil Perez,”—vain his cry,—
Yon rock might from the coming gale
Have readier reply.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

With stooping front and shortened steel
 Gil Perez rushes on ;
'Tis plain he cannot hear nor feel,
 One thought is his alone.

He rushes on the cold sharp blade ;
 It hath an easy part,
Its way to death already laid
 Right thro' the broken heart.

Black Godefroy has fled to sea,
 From the avenger's hand ;
But the ship and all her company
 Went down in sight of land.

Now when the lonely lady heard
 She gave a serpent's hiss,
And uttered neither groan nor word
 Save this, and only this :

“ Woe ! woe ! my wicked heart of stone,
 Which true love never moved,
But only pride to win the one
 Who was of all beloved ! ”

And colder grew her heart each day,
 Till frenzy fired her brain,
And so they bore her far away,
 Bound with an iron chain.

The Afterglow:

She crouches, dumb, from year to year,
Save when the moon is high,
She wrings her hands and singeth clear
Her song of misery :

“ Woe ! woe ! this wicked heart of stone !
Which never true love moved,
But only pride to win the one
Who was of all beloved !”

CXXII.

LOVE AND DEATH.

Down the sunny slopes of Fate
Sprang from slumber youthful Love,
At a bound to Ada's gate,
Where all things of beauty move.
Blushes new he brought, with sighs,
Freshening fire for heart and eyes.

From the deep dark caves of Fate,
On an ice wind floated Death.
Oh, for Love a dreary mate !
With a kiss of poisonous breath,
Swift to Ada's bower he steals,
And sheds the wound that never heals.

Now they perish, youth and bloom :
All bright things with Ada die :
Only Love amid the gloom,
Questions Death with bitter cry:
" Why so sudden, why so fast,
Tyrant, sure of all at last ? "

CXXIII.

BALLAD.

ALONE, alone, in the willowy nook,
Alone was I never here before ;
Oh, gossiping sedges, oh, garrulous brook,
How sad ye make my heart, and sore !

For here we sat in the day's last gleam ;
Side by side, where I sit now :
And we laughed at our eyes as they danced in
the stream,
Till the wreath I had woven fell from her brow.

The wreath I had twined of the lilies white
And the tiny forget-me-nots, tender and blue :
I called it the bridal wreath that night,
She owned it a love gift sweet and true.

And we lingered thro' twilight damp and late.
For we thought no harm of the starry June :
We heard not the night wind whispering fate.
We saw no death in the glancing moon !

Oh, she kept the wreath with loving care,
And she hung it over her dying bed,
And I laid it across her golden hair,
And it fades with her down among the dead.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

CXXIV.

ROVER COLIN.

O'ER many a foreign sea and strand
Colin the Rover passed ;
A stranger in a kinsman's land
To seek a home at last.

His brand and baldric cast aside,
He donned the shepherd's gear ;
So tall a shepherd far and wide
You'll find not many a year.

And as he kept his kinsman's flocks,
Down where the waters brawl,
Between the meadows and the rocks,
This chance did him befall.

Down the far bank, from rugged height,
Rounded a little wood ;
Like Moorish pillar, slim and white,
Each silver birch bole stood.

And from its twilight grey and green,
(He scarcely trusts his eyes),
A lovely lady stept between,
Nor marked his rash surprise.

The Afterglow :

Her gown was of the dove-grey silk,
And raven-black her hair,
Her neck and hands were as the milk,
And gentle was her air.

And as she crowned the little bay,
Where the smooth currents glide,
Her picture all reflected lay
Upon the glossy tide.

It filled with rapture Colin's soul,
And his light sense beguiled,
When, seated on the mossy knoll,
Right courteously she smiled.

She heeded not his lowly bow,
Nor sigh, which all exprest,
"Oh, would I had my bravery now,—
My baldric o'er my breast !

" My bright Toledo at my side,
My Spanish hat and plume !
Alas ! for fallen fate and pride !
She sees a shepherd groom."

Still as he stood she took no heed,
But sat with folded hands,
Down gazing, thro' the current's speed,
Into the golden sands.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

And as he stood, and gazed and gazed,
Upon her beauty rare,
He asked himself, bewitched, amazed,
Is it a dream or snare ?

Just then the demon, rude and bold,
Stirred up his rover's heart,
And a foot he plunged in the stream so cold .
But the maiden gave no start.

His better spirit from on high
Shed now a shame and fear.
He fancied from her downcast eye
He saw a shining tear.

He cursed himself, he blessed the maid ;
Still there transfix'd he stood,
Then stammering, half abashed, he said,
I'll hail her, by the Rood !

“ Oh, lady ! deign to look on me,
Nor think me all I seem.
My speech and mien are signs to thee—
Oh, is it all a dream ?

“ A stranger from beyond the sea,
By fortune hither borne,
To serve, perhaps, to succour thee,
Then treat me not with scorn.

The Afterglow :

“Oh, whence art thou, so bright and fair?”

But never word she said;

The wind it swayed her silken hair,

And she turned away her head.

“Oh, who art thou so calm and fine?”

But she did not turn to look;

There flashed on her cheek the bold sunshine,

And she bent her o'er the brook.

“Oh, can I serve thee? Lady, say.”

But she sat like marble, mute;

He cast his shepherd's crook away,

And touched his yellow flute.

He trilled a gay and gladdening round,

The notes danced down the glen;

He breathed a tender sighing sound,

Would melt the hearts of men.

'Twas now an ancient homely tune,

Now an outlandish air;

But each and all a bootless boon

To move that statue fair.

He dropt his flute, he drooped his eyes,

Tho' resolute at heart,

Resolved to test with new surprise

Her persevering art.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

So, without prelude short or long,
Right cheerily he sung ;
And this his galliard shepherd's song
Across the stream he flung.

SONG.

Plant your foot on the tuft of mallow,
Clasp in your hand my shepherd's crook.
The stones are firm and the water shallow ;
Come to me, darling, over the brook.

Sweet is the bank where the thyme is seeding,
Cool are the shadows, mossy the root :
Sit here beside me and see the lambs feeding,
Sit by and smile, as I play on my flute.

Songs I can sing, if my love will but listen,
Of Gay Goshawk and of Allan-a-Dale :
Till in the sunset the long grasses glisten,
Till the grey twilight creeps up the vale.

Tales I can tell her, tales of the battle,
Deeds of the mighty by land and by sea,
How the winds rave and the guns roar and
rattle,
While she sits tranquil as flower on the lea.

The Afterglow :

But should her bosom, timid and tender,
Shrink from the hurly, oh, changed be the
tone !

So she but smile on her graceless offender,
Love shall the theme be, love, love alone !

Then plant your foot on the tuft of mallow,
Clasp in your hand my shepherd's crook.
Firm are the stones, and the stream is shallow ;
Come to me, darling, over the brook.

The song flowed fresh, the song so meet
For fancy or disdain ;
But it touched no whit that lady sweet,
To make her wroth or fain.

And as he stamp'd in his despair
She from her lustrous eyes
Sent forth farewell, as gracious there
As angel from the skies.

But lo ! upon the bosky height
A little page so gay ;
And as he waved a kerchief white
She rose and went away.

She vanished o'er the rising down :
Colin could nought but groan.
The river hissed, the rocks did frown,
And he was all alone.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

He sighed, and stared in frantic mood,
Quoth he, "She did not flout ;"—
When from the hanging birchen wood
The little page stept out.

Was never child of mortal race,
Thought Colin, who might wear
So innocent, so bright a face
Between such golden hair.

"Now tell me, tell me, pretty lad,
Who is that lady thine,
With face so beautiful and sad,
Like virgin in a shrine ?"

"Oh, shepherd ! stranger you must be ;
For known thro' all the vale
Is our sweet Lady of the Lea,
The Mute of Elfindale.

"Her father, with a princely hand,
Rules mountain, wood, and dell,
Her mother, from a distant land,
Sleeps in the white chapelle.

"'Tis mine to watch, the daylight long,
That lovely lady's ways ;
I heard your piping, heard your song,
From yonder birchen maze.

The Afterglow :

“ My belt a silver whistle bears,
Its sound is shrill and clear,
And at its call the foresters
Come trooping far and near.

“ I marked your wonder and affright,
As tho’ by haunted rill
A spirit form had crost your sight :
But, oh ! she works no ill.

“ She blesses all she comes anear,
She greets with holy smile ;
She prays to Heaven with many a tear,
For sinners dark and vile.

“ Strange lore she can with signs declare
Of what is true and good :
Her teacher is the man of prayer,
The hermit of the wood.

“ A clerk is he, and wondrous sage,
He hath a saintly look :
He shows her many a pictured page
Within his great clasp’d book.

“ He teaches we should pray for all :
Be sure she prays for thee,
And wert thou ill as thou art tall,
Her prayer would profit be.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

“The sun has set below the fell,
My lady is away :
Soon wilt thou hear the tinkling bell
Which summons us to pray.

“She knows, she loves, the holy times,
The Lady of the Lea :
Farewell, farewell, you hear the chimes,
And we will pray for thee.”

So said, he climbed the moorland brow.
Then pale upon the bank,
Like one all sunstruck, smitten low,
The Rover Colin sank.

He sank in frenzy, shuddering down,
With strange, heart-chilling fears ;
His stormy brow relaxed its frown,
His eyes ran o'er with tears.

The stars stood thick o'er hill and tree :
He rose and smote his breast.
His flock he folded silently,
But where could he find rest ?

And never more he piped or sung ;
And wondering neighbours say
Poor Colin lost both heart and tongue
On that ill-omened day.

The Afterglow:

Still lingering by the streamlet shore,
 He sought the lonely rocks,
Until the wintry winds blew sore,
 And homesteads housed the flocks.

Nor afterwards was Colin seen,
 By river, dale, or down :
'Tis said who once hath roving been
 Bides not by field nor town.

Now springs had past and come again,
 And at her mother's side
The fair mute lady long had lain,
 Death's innocent young bride.

When once, they say, a stranger there,
 With beard and amice grey,
Spent a long wintry night in prayer,
 Then passed like night away.

He left a cross of the golden ore,
 Which made the finder start ;
For Rover Colin's name it bore,
 Carved on a ruby heart.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

CXXV.

BALLAD.

THE day was dying, dying,
In the dewy folds of night ;
And a bright-haired boy was lying
Stark on the field of fight ;
And his love was away with her maidens gay,
In her home o'er the ocean far away.

And as they were singing, singing,
Came the sun, his crimson flood
Over turret and terrace flinging ;
And they cried, “ He sets in blood ! ”
And they listened the thunder booming afar,
And it filled every heart with the panic of war.

Oh, woe for the maiden, the maiden !
With the ominous hue and sound,
Like a delicate lily o'erladen,
She sinks to the golden ground.
Or ever the tidings of battle are given,
Hope saith that the lovers have met in heaven !

CXXVI.

THE CRUSADE R.

He quaffed that sweet and bitter cup, which
crowns the parting day,
The sad sweet kiss, the first and last, then tore
himself away.
She stood within the casement—fainter fell his
ringing heel,—
She watched his stride across the court—her
tears reflect the steel ;
She saw him bow the dragon-crest beneath the
wicket door,
With the Red Cross on his shoulder—but she
never saw him more.

CXXVII.

BALLAD.

I once loved the water, the swift, singing water,
And its smooth shining ford at the foot of the
moor,

For it led to my Ellen, the grey fisher's daughter,
Who smiled in my eyes from the rose-tangled
door.

Now I loathe the wild water, the black, howling
water,

With its treacherous ford at the foot of the
moor;

For there sank my Ellen, the grey fisher's
daughter,

And death and despair haunt the thorn-tangled
door !

The Afterglow:

CXXVIII.

BALLAD.

Oh, long he woo'd a milk-white dove,
As cold and pure as sunless snow,
And when he asked her for her love
'Twas never either aye or no.

She never said, I will not come ;
She sat with downcast eyes demure,
Nor scorned nor praised the happy home
He proffered her in love secure.

He thought, I will depart awhile,
And my return its fruit may show,
A sigh or tear, a blush or smile.
I weary for the aye or no.

And so his sad, reluctant ways
He went; but ne'er returned again;
Shines on his heart a blooming face,
Which kindles at his faintest strain.

Tones tremble as they softly greet,
Dark eyes at every parting flow :
He finds his love, his life, complete,
No need to seek the aye or no.

CXXIX.

THE WATER RUSHING.

It was the happy summer-tide,
The hedges all were blushing
With rosy wreaths on every side,
As though each bush had been a bride,
When Mark and May agreed to ride
To see the water rushing.

They met a friend upon the rise ;
Each felt the other blushing.
What matter ?—all was paradise !
Riding beneath the golden skies,
Each guided by an angel's eyes,
To see the water rushing.

They saw the glen, they saw the gleam,
But what with tears and blushing,
All strange as in a lover's dream,
The rocks did glossy auburn seem,
And deepest violet ran the stream,
With all its water rushing.

The Afterglow :

Long years they've travelled side by side,
And long have left off blushing ;
They smile to think how once they sighed,
They smile whene'er they name the ride
They took on that sweet summer tide
To see the water rushing.

CXXX.

THE WHITE WOOD GATE.

Shaded by the checkered curtain
At her window Alice sate,
Peering, fearing, all uncertain,
Towards the little white wood gate.

Never foot of wandering stranger
Early passes there or late ;
No one save the belted ranger
May unlock the white wood gate.

Mother from the market alley
Comes not there with loaded crate,
Long her path thro' plain and valley
Rounds beneath the white wood gate.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

In his chimney nook already
Father smokes in quiet state,
And the brothers, still and steady,
Dream not of the white wood gate.

Hark ! she hears the rifle thunder,
And she starts, no more sedate,
For she sees with happy wonder,
Mother at the white wood gate.

Ah ! who bears the mother's burden ?
Who steps forth with brow elate ?
At the window sees his guerdon,
Sees her from the white wood gate ?

The Afterglow:

CXXXI.

THE DEER-STEALER'S BRIDE.

As I was coming o'er Bellerby moor,

Gold on the heather and gloom in the dell,
There I met my constant wooer,
And the sun was setting on forest and fell.

“ And what makes thee, sweetheart, to roam?”

Gold on the heather and gloom in the dell,
“ It was that thou should'st set me home ; ”
And the sun was setting on forest and fell.

Now scarce we talked for a mile or more,

Gold on the heather and gloom in the dell,
When out rushed rangers three or four,
And the sun was setting on forest and fell,

Out from behind the old grey rock,

Gold on the heather and gloom in the dell,
With a shout and a tramp like an earthquake
sheck,

And the sun was setting on forest and fell.

They wrenched his cross-bow from his hand,

Gold on the heather and gloom in the dell,
And twisted his arms with a hempen band,
And the sun was setting on forest and fell.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

They tore him away, tho' I wept and strove,
Gold on the heather and gloom in the dell,
And they jeered at me for a felon's love,
And the sun was setting on forest and fell.

Now here I wander alone, alone ;
Gold on the heather and gloom in the dell,
My eyes are dim and my heart is stone,
And the sun is setting on forest and fell.

Oh woe to the baron, and woe to his deer,
Gold on the heather and gloom in the dell,
And woe to the forest laws severe !
And the sun is setting on forest and fell.

They have done to the death the sweetest youth,
Gold on the heather and gloom in the dell,
And have broken for ever a heart of truth,
And the day is dark upon forest and fell.

The Afterglow :

CXXXII.

MABEL AND MAY.

Of May and Mabel thus they sing :—
The Franklin's daughters fair
Went forth one morning in the spring
To breathe the sunny air.

Two sweeter flowers, more gaily drest,
Might on no soil be found ;
And Mabel, she looked east and west,
While May looked on the ground.

“Look,” Mabel saith, “at yonder boor
On the unruly horse,
Tearing across the purple moor,
Scattering the golden gorse.”

“It is no boor,” quoth simple May,
“He glitters as he flies,—
But, sister, see him sink away !
Ah me ! on earth he lies !

“He lies nor stirs,—and at his side
His horse stands quivering by !
Oh, Mabel, what a fearful tide,
All heaven-struck thus to lie !

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

“Or wounded, chased, with slackened rein
Each foe outstripped but death,”—
But Mabel with a swift disdain
Rushed o'er the broken heath.

And when they stood where mute he lay,
This was her ready word,—
“He lives ! now fly, my precious May,
Fly like a winged bird !

“Bid Hob and Hans the litter bear,
The litter all complete ;
’Tis right we nurse with tender care
Whom fate flings at our feet.”

Now breathless May the hall has sought,
And well the varlets heed,
The cushioned litter swift is brought,—
But ah ! with bootless speed.

There’s neither man nor Mabel there,
Nor yet the panting horse,
Only the moorland wide and bare—
Only the golden gorse.

The Afterglow :

CXXXIII.

WILFUL MAIDEN'S LAMENT.

OH, for the light of the young spring hours,
As they dance from the dewy east !
And oh ! for the breath of the bending flowers,
Where the butterfly holds his feast !

And oh ! for the primrose's pure pale gold,
Or the flame of the aconite ;
For I weary to death of the winter cold,
And the snow so ghostly white.

I weary to death of these rooms, these rooms,
And the fire burns black and low ;
And I long for a sight of the buds and blooms,
In the joy of their summer glow.

And it's oh ! for the chasing sun and shade !
And it's oh ! for the scent of the hay !
And it's woe to the wilful foolish maid
Who sends her true love away !

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

CXXXIV.

MOONSTRUCK.

I WAKE my lute when all is mute,
My song is but for dead men's ears,
I sing and weep when others sleep,
And charm the night with tuneful tears.

They call me mad—I am but sad,
My tears are mingling with the dew ;
They hang all night like spangles bright,
On Ellen's tomb so cold and new.

Sometimes I strive the stone to rive,
To see how calmly Ellen sleeps ;
But all in vain—I pant with pain,
And thro' my heart the ice blood creeps.

On each new year I see her bier,
As winter brings our bridal day ;
Her shroud is white, her face is bright,
The angels bore her soul away.

My soul content with Ellen's went,
My weary body lingers here ;
Ever alone I make my moan,
In hopes that death may be anear.

The Afterglow :

I am not old,—but shrunk with cold,
My teeth they chatter to the moon ;
My heart is dead, my limbs are lead,
I feel a coming sleep or swoon.

Come, long white cloud, and be my shroud.
My bier shall be sweet Ellen's grave.
Ye stars, in showers strew golden flowers :
Ye wandering night winds, moan and rave.

The waning moon, she heeds my tune,
The pale stars shoot adown the skies,
Now, brighter far than moon or star,
I catch the light of Ellen's eyes.

CXXXV.

SONG.

THERE lived a lady—I tell you true,
Comely she was, and young and gay :
And her will was ever her own wild way :
 Yes, I tell you true.
She loved her hound and horse and hawk,
And better by far to gallop than walk,
 And oh, the hills are blue !

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

And many a lover—I tell you true,
Fair and noble and resolute came,
But her frowns, like frost winds, quenched
their flame,

Yes, I tell you true.

Saith she I will dance, and race, and ride,
But never a youth shall call me bride ;
And oh, the hills are blue !

Now years crept on,—and I tell you true,
Whether from fancy or from fright,
A change came over that lady bright :

Yes, I tell you true.

She danced and raced and rode no more,
But paced the trim garden o'er and o'er ;
And oh, the hills are blue !

And stranger still—I tell you true,
She paced not the garden all alone,
But aye at her side was a stately one,

Yes, I tell you true.

And she kept her word, nor a youth did wed.
But a grey-bearded knight with a fair bald
head ;

And oh, the hills are blue !

CXXXVI.

MALA LINGUA.

MALA LINGUA sat crouched on the scarp of a hill,
Carousing on nightshade and bolting blue pill,
I trow 'twas enough in your fancy to see
The glare of his eyes in their ragerie.

He looked over tower and he looked over town,
On his mouth was a sneer, on his brow was a
frown ;

He felt his deep jaw and his larynx to itch,
As he drank down his spirits to calumny pitch.

His meal is concluded, his bottle he throws,
And it cuts to the bone a poor lamb on the nose ;
He fills his lean hands with the pills that remain,
And crams them all down a weak child in the
lane.

He strides to the town, for he knows where to go ;
There's a snug little party sits waiting below ;
Choice sprites of each sex I am sorry to say,
Great professors of candour, and most of them
grey.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

Scandal broth is their drink, it is weak, they confess,

But no one has courage to strengthen the mess ;
Tho' each hint is a sting, every shrug is a wound,
As they each shake a head like a worrying hound.

Mala Lingua despises their shrugs and their hints,
Their mean innuendoes and pitiful feints ;
With a leer and a grin, he thrice curses and spits,
And the thin veil of charity flies into bits.

Then the demons of envy and hate who were stored

In the bosoms of all that respectable board,
Uncoiled their foul lengths, gave a sting and a hiss,

And hugged every heart with a poisonous bliss.

Mala Lingua holds forth,—see, his eyes are like flames,

For he seasons his gall with dates, places, and names ;

Open-mouthed the black slander, they gulp hot and deep,

And all their dull spleens in misanthropy steep.

"Tis reported this revel worked woe to the town,
That wrath and suspicion were sown up and down ;

That a love-match was broken, a duel was fought,
And ruinous law-suits encumbered the court.

The Afterglow:

Furthermore, that the town, all aroused by the
strife,
Scented out the vile source that had poisoned its
life,
So that old Mala Lingua no longer can show
His ill-omened visage to mortals below.

But the wretch is a fiend, who all justice derides,
And into small demons his essence divides :
Counterparts ; every one an invisible shrimp.
There's scarcely a spot wholly free from an imp.

Of these small Mala Linguas, oh, let us beware ;
Let us kill them with physic, with kindness, with
care ;
Let us fill up our hearts from the pure streams
above,
And drown all this spawn in the fountain of
love.

CXXXVII.

BALLAD.

“ BRING down my sword and lance so long,
Hauberk and helm and shield ;
Lead from its stall my courser strong,
For I must forth afield.

“ I surfeit of these dainty feasts,
And chambering night and day ;
I feel like one of Circe’s beasts :
Away, I will away ! ”

A voice like honey, from on high,
Fell with caressing flow ;
“ Why, shouts my love so hardily ?
Ah, wherefore would he go ?

“ Why seek afar with spear and steed
Ambition’s shadowy spoil ?
Sweet life is here, with all we need,
Life without fear or coil.”

And oh, the smiths have wrought the steel,
To hooks and hunting gear ;
The golden spurs from off his heel,
Hold gems for lady dear.

The Afterglow :

And while in silken splendour housed,
 He pledged the lip-red wine,
The vulture and the wolf caroused
 Upon the courser fine.

Then down there tripped a wanton may,
 And took him by the wrist ;
Ah, little did he wince or say,
 But her white hand he kiss'd.

Her hand he kissed : then with a groan,
 He follows where she leads,
He had not left her there alone,
 Not for a hundred steeds.

There hissed a burly fiend from the door
 To the raven of the night :
“ That makes of gallants just a score,
 All lost in her delight.

“ His deadly doom is sealed to-day ;
 He hath no more to give ;
His wine is drugged ; 'till twilight grey,
 He may not look to live.

“ And thus a thriving snare she plies,
 And will whilst I am here ;
For I am just the lord of lies,
 And she my daughter dear.”

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

CXXXVIII.

LEGEND OF WITCHCRAFT DELL.

“ Oh, what a doom is thine, ladye !
The truth I speak from the heart ;
Vain is thy frown or smile to me,
I know thee what thou art.

“ I know that pearly ear of thine
Can droop like the fallow doe's,
When dark is thy neck with many a fleck,
Now flaming like the rose.

“ The ranger watched at break of day
Thy lair in the misty lawn,
When all among the fern you lay,
Suckling the spotted fawn.”

The lady knit her burning brow,
But never a word she spake ;
Her hot black eye is on him now,
And holds him like a snake.

His heart sinks down in dumb amaze,
He feels a shuddering heat,
Turned to a stag beneath that gaze,
He crouches at her feet.

The Afterglow :

She leads him with a silken noose
Over the rushy floor ;
She lets the rabid ban-dog loose
And scares him from the door.

He gains the beech grove dark and steep,
Weary, and soiled, and torn ;
But oh, his heart may never sleep
For vengeance and for scorn.

He wanders wild with glaring eye,
He roams from glade to glade ;
The herds his silken necklace spy
And start away afraid.

But forth there bounds from out the brake
A mighty stag of ten ;
Deep-throated, of a noble make,
Fearless of dogs and men.

His challenge is a stamp and roar ;
His onset like the storm ;
And crashing horns and dropping gore
Their hairy sides deform.

But brief the fury of the strife,
With his faint human heart
The poor transform'd breathes out his life—
Victim of witch's art.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

Yet ere his spirit passed away
 Into the world unseen,
The fashion of his changeful clay
 Resumed its ancient mien.

So was he found by archers three,
 And who need doubt the tale ?
He told them all I tell to thee
 Within this winding vale.

"Tis said that priest, and squire, and hind,
 With rope, and book, and bell,
And torches lit, with pious mind
 Sought out the witch's cell.

But all in vain they rove and roam
 The valley sward and fern ;
No trace of any human home
 Their zealous eyes discern.

And so they banned the Witchcraft Dell ;
 The name still lingers there ;
Still lingers too, as doctors tell,
 An insalubrious air.

The very truth I cannot say,
 But this I joy to know,
It leads us by the loveliest way
 To ancient Ivinghoe.

The Afterglow:

From lordly Ashridge on the steep,
By many a copse and glen,
And winding wood-path green and steep
Down to the furrowed plain.

And when the wild rose stars the brake,
And summer breezes swell,
In beauty's name I charge you take
A ride through Witchcraft Dell.

CXXXIX.

THE LONE HOUSE BY THE SEA.

'Twas from the lips of Pilot Joe
I heard this tale of storm and woe ;
Of the shadow-faced maiden all in white,
Whose eyeballs glared with a ghostly light,
Ever by day, but most at night,
In the lone house by the sea.

No one knew from whence she came,
Nor kith, nor kin, nor age, nor name ;
Nor ever a light those walls within
From chink or casement else was seen,
Save from the eyes of witchfire green.
Oh, the lone house by the sea !

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

The Afterglow:

He swore,—and we thought the house would fall,—
By saints and sinners, one and all,
That night, tho' a hurricane should roar,
He'd run his galley upon the shore
And beat like a drum on the haunted door
Of the lone house by the sea.

“ I’ll wake this shadow-faced maid forlorn.
Here, swineherd, lend thy bellowing horn ;
She shall tread with me the shingle and sand,
Together we’ll dance a saraband.
She shall drink from the flask I hold in my hand.
To the lone house by the sea ! ”

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

Now the moon into darkness soon took flight,
As the wrath of the storm-winds shook the night,
 Calling the seas with a clamorous roar,
And lashing the billows from shore to shore ;
Yet few thought of Tiger Tom the more.
 Oh, the lone house by the sea !

Tom was loved of none, and known to few ;
He went for a smuggler and pirate too ;
 His scheme was a feint, some said, or fun,
But the elders growled in an undertone,
“ He who starts for no good shall meet with
 none.”

Now louder and out the storm-winds rang ;
Day after day with a deafening clang ;
 'Twixt volleying rain and surges high
Light was blotted from every eye,
There seemed no morrow for earth or sky.
 Oh, the lone house by the sea !

The Afterglow :

And thus thro' a week of whirl and woe
The fishermen stagger to and fro ;
All night the old church bells did knoll,
Swaying about with irregular toll,
As never for Christian's parting soul.

Oh, the lone house by the sea !

The clerk and the sexton did madly swear
They saw a vision in high mid-air,—
Something blue, and something bright,
Tiger Tom and the maid in white
Dancing a round in the gusty night.

Oh, the lone house by the sea !

But sad were all hearts when the morning sun
Showed what the seven days' storm had done ;
The smacks from their moorings were wrenched
and tost,
The brown old boats were battered and lost,
And ruin and wreck strewed all the coast.

Oh, the lone house by the sea !

The old men wept, and all averred
That never such storm had been felt or heard ;
And of Tiger Tom was known no more.
Not a plank of his galley, nor rudder, nor oar,
Ever crested a wave, or drifted ashore.

Oh, the lone house by the sea !

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

Only the usquebaugh flask was found,
Blackened and burst on the shingly ground.
No house remains, but the cliff is rent,
And deep within, from a mossy pent,
A purifying stream is sent.

 Oh, the lone house by the sea !

And they say, in a storm the sound is borne,
Far on the winds, of the swineherd's horn ;
 But never again by night or day
Did the shadow-faced maiden pace that way,
Or glare at our hearts over beach and bay,
 From the lone house by the sea.

The Afterglow:

CXL.

THE FIRE SHIP.

IN the offing to westward there loometh a bark,

 And the wind it rises higher.

She loometh long, and large, and dark :

 All behind, a sea of fire.

But the clouds above are black as the grave,

Or the neck of this negro galley slave.

 Aha ! the fire !

She rocketh now ever up and down,

 And the wind rises higher and higher.

See, she runs up aloft a blood-red crown,

 And her shrouds are all afire !

Stem and stern, above and below,

All glares in the hideous blood-red glow.

 Aha ! the fire !

She reels ! but quickly she steadies and veers,

 And the raging winds rise higher.

The clouds drop down ; right thro' she steers,

 A horrible hill of fire !

She makes for the galley.—“ Pull one, pull all,”
I hear thro' the hissing the hell-mates call.

 Aha ! the fire !

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

The foul fiend himself was the figure-head,
And the wind rises higher and higher.
Vomiting torrents of sulphur and lead,
And his hair was like founts of fire.
No rudder was there, but with long red wake
There rolled in the furrow the ocean snake.
Aha ! the fire !

This ballad the old sea harper sung
As the wind on the wold rose higher,
And we all to the chimney-corner clung,
Peering by times at the fire.
He chaunted it thro' to a wild sad tune,
And his eyes stared out like the cold full moon.
Aha ! the fire !

The Afterglow :

CXLI.

SEAMAN AND MERMAID.

S. Golden hair and green fin !
Why so shy of land ?

M. Sable locks and white skin,
Leave your dusty sand.

S. I would take thee home with me ;
I could love thee, golden hair !

M. What, and leave the crystal sea ?
All thy speeches are but air.

S. Fair my home within the Strand,
Walled with sheets of radiant glass.

M. Is it paved with sparkling sand ?
Can one see the merfolk pass ?

S. Thou shalt view the Lord Mayor's show ;
Thou shalt see the Prince of Wales.

M. Is it rich as sunset glow ?
Has he golden fins and scales ?

S. And the Princess, fair as thou,
Riding thro' the summer park.

M. Wears she star-fish on her brow ?
Shine her blue eyes in the dark ?

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

S. Thou shalt sport in pleasant lake
With the porpoise and the seal.

M. Why should I my cave forsake,
Where they flock when sea-bells peal ?

S. Thousands will thy court attend ;
Thou shalt be our ocean queen.

M. Ah, my tail will sore offend ;
My poor scales are all too green.

S. Come, sweet lady of the sea,
Put my shining bracelets on.

M. They are all too large for me,
And their clasps are joined in one.

S. Wind this white cord round thy neck :
I, thy slave, will hold a part.

M. All free motion this will check,
And I fear some hidden art.

S. Seamen own no art but love ;
Come, then, to my floating home.

M. Hard for me to climb above ;
Better thou with me shouldst roam.

S. Closer draw, to catch my speech,
And we quickly shall agree.

M. Safer here beyond thy reach,
I can float and hearken thee.

The Afterglow :

S. Thou art icier than the floe ;
Thou hast neither soul nor mind..

M. Guess'd I where such wonders grow,
Were it wise to dive and find ?

S. Farewell, mermaid, since by thee
All my love-gifts are refused.

M. Ah, we maidens of the sea
Wary prove, too long abused.

Frank thy words, but well I ken
Man doth all to overreach.

Mermaids sound, as well as men,
Rope, and gyve, and cunning speech.

Thou art gone : but we shall meet !
All unto thy grave I go.

In the cold wave's winding-sheet,
Thou, ere morn, wilt glide below.

Oh ye land maids ! luckless slaves !
Had ye but our tails and fins !

One wide leap into the waves,
And we mock man's crafty sins.

Who would crave a mind and soul,
When such treach'rous fruits they yield ?

Farewell cliff, and sand, and shoal !
Seas their own sea maiden shield.

CXLII.

MERMAID'S TEACHING.

“ O little maid with flying hair,
And eyes so wide and free,
Who taught thee all that wondrous air,
Like wailing winds at sea ? ”

“ Oh, I learned it of the mermaiden
Out of the silver sea ;
When the sky is amber, and pink, and green,
She comes and sings to me.”

“ And what dost give the mermaiden ?
Or is her teaching free ? ”

“ Oh, I give her a golden ringlet then,
And I give her kisses three.”

“ O little maid with yellow hair,
Thou wilt be true to me ;—
What does she with the ringlet fair,
And what with the kisses three ? ”

“ She strews her bed with the locks of gold,
And she gives the kisses three
To the king of the mermen, bright and bold,
Who rules beneath the sea.”

The Afterglow :

CXLIII.

SEA BALLAD FOR A CHILD.

“ Come, little maiden, come with me
 Into my fairy boat ;
I will sing you a song of the gay blue sea
 While we skim, and dip, and float.

“ My boat is built of the shining pearls,
 And strewed with the red sea flowers,
We will row to the merry mermaid girls
 Who live in the coral bowers.

“ Oh there they sit and there they play,
 And sing, and clap their hands,
Or dig with their silver spades, all day,
 Deep down in the coral sands.

“ And oh ! what treasures there they find !
 And each one has her wish,
Bright oranges with sugary rind,
 And dolls and flying fish !”

“ Oh lady, you speak fair and kind,
 And softly sways the sea,
But mother I may not leave behind
 For the coral bowers and thee.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

“ And father says yon little cloud
In the east so far away
Will grow to a storm so fierce and loud,
And he bade me not to stay.

“ Look—mother beckons from the beach,
Hark—father calls to me.
In vain your shining hands you reach,
I will not go with thee.”

So the little maid ran fast and free
Into her father’s arms,
And told him all her history,
And all the boat-maid’s charms.

But the fairy-boat ne’er met his sight,
Nor yet the mermaid’s face ;
Only the wild waves’ crests so white
Like lions in a chase.

Then up and spake an ancient dame,
And she was salt and brown,
Like a figure-head which had braved the flame,
When the burning ship went down.

“ My little lass, heed what I say,
Ah ! well it is with thee
That every word thou didst obey
Thy parents spoke to thee.

The Afterglow :

“ For once a little tiny maid,
Clad in a purple frock,
In spite of all her mother said
Went wandering round the rock.

“ In spite of all her nurse could say,
In spite of sister’s cry,
Still on and on she made her way
Over the wet and dry.

“ When out behind the cliff so dark
The mermaid came and smiled,
And in her little pearly bark
Took up the foolish child.

“ And the waves began to rush so strong,
And the loud rough winds to roar,
And swept the fairy boat along,
And the child was seen no more.

“ But sometimes in the golden sheen
Which the moon throws o’er the sea,
A little shadowy boat is seen,
And in it figures three.

“ And one at the stern is black and tall,
And one at the stem is fair,
And in the midst sits the maiden small,
And tears her curling hair.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

“ ‘ Oh, mother ! mother ! ’ is her cry,
But clouds soon hide the sight,
And I know, whene’er that boat I spy
A wreck will be the night.”

CXLIV.

TO A CONVALESCENT AT THE SEA-SIDE.

Tho’ the valley still be green,
All its flowers are grey ;
Only dying leaves are seen
Desperately gay.
Lady, bring us back with thee
Roses, roses of the sea.

Ah ! you say, the glittering waves
Blossoms never bear,
And within their sounding caves
All is foam and air ;
How, then, can I bring with me
Roses, roses of the sea ?

Every singing breeze that dips
In the sunny spray
Breathes a bloom for cheek and lips
Through the wintry day.
These, dear lady, bring with thee
Roses, roses of the sea.

The Afterglow :

CXLV.

*PARAPHRASE OF AN UNKNOWN
ODE OF ANACREON.*

Beautiful her face and rare,
Laughs thro' clouds of sunny hair,
With those eyes, like azure lakes,
Where heaven its image finds, not makes.
Maiden-voiced, all soft and low,
Her sweet mouth is Cupid's bow,
Ruby-tinted, silver ringing,
Formed for blessing, formed for singing ;
And its arrows are kind speech,
Winging weal to all they reach,
Weal to all excepting him
Who, a prisoner, heart and limb,
In her presence holds his breath,
Waiting there for life or death ;
Every accent, every glance
Pierces him like flaming lance.
Ah, my friend, can you discover
Who may be this trembling lover ?
Anacreon 'tis—and what is more,
Only one of twice a score.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

CXLVI.

A CHARADE.

1.

When radiant Minnie fresh from town,
And Dora, in Parisian gown,
Deign our poor country to explore,
And add their charms to Nature's store.
As they the cottages pass by
The peasants stare with curious eye,
Envy their amplitude of skirt,
Or wonder how they like the dirt.
See farmer Giles, his hat in hand,
With mouth and gate wide open stand ;
'Mid patronizing nods, they shed
Rich odours on his ducking head.
And now they make for yonder grove —
A grove what maiden does not love ?
Thinking to muse a pleasant hour
On mossy seat in leafy bower ;
When suddenly my *first* is seen,
An acre of good sward between ;
And as the maidens nearer draw,
Suspicion ripens into awe.

The Afterglow :

Cries Minnie, “ Oh ! beyond the thorns
There stands a bull—I see its horns !
It stamps its foot, it shakes its head.
It wags its tail, its eyes are red !
Dora, my love, do leave off humming :
I’m sure the dreadful creature’s coming.”
No need for more ; the panic’s caught.
Like fawns they scour, nor stay for aught ;
Here falls a fan, and there a novel.
Whose author never thought to grovel.
Without a pause, or breath, or look,
They rush right thro’ the laughing brook,
Till past the meadows, climbed the stiles,
They refuge seek with farmer Giles,
Who grins, though on his best behaviour,
At splendid misses from Belgravia.

2.

My *second*, when with patriot band
He gained his own Italian land,
Ere from its sheath leapt forth his blade.
The gallant Junius Brutus made,
And as he rose to greet the sky,
Fulfilled the auspicious prophecy ;
But then, or let stern truth confute us,
Many as well as Junius Brutus
Have made my *second*,—tho’ indeed
They gained thereby no glorious meed.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

Many a lad and many a lass,
Many a pad and many an ass,
Many a parson in his preaching,
Many a knave in over-reaching,
Many a lawyer in his pleading,
Many a scholar in his reading ;
In short—how great soe'er his credit,
I only ask,—who has not made it ?

3

But of them all, who have their birth
Upon this manufacturing earth,
Poet, philosopher, or artist,
From Derby's Lord, to Jack the Chartist,
Is there a hand, or mind, or soul
Could fabricate or dream my *whole* ?
What tho' Leviathan be there,
With decks as long as Berkeley Square ;
Tho' John and Jonathan grown frantic,
Electrify the vast Atlantic ;
And shoot along in steaming cars,
Without a limit save the stars ;
Not one and all their engineers
Shaken together by the ears,
Till there resulted from the mêlée
A ponderous scientific jelly.
Vain exercise ! do all they could,
A bowl of frog's spawn were as good !

The Afterglow :

Ah no ! hands off, while you admire
My vernal star devoid of fire,
Bending so modestly to earth,
As ever grateful for its birth.
Green cups with golden brims are here,
And thirsty bees from far and near,
Rejoicing, take their fragrant fill
Of that which sunny noons distil ;
Nor man disdains the nectar fine,
But medicates and calls it wine.

CXLVII.

SIR ORACLE.

No sadness tempered the discourse,
Tho' frailty all and vice his song ;
The brackish wit with easy force
Told shrewdly on an idle throng,

He harped on maxims grimly true,
And motives oftener vile than brave ;
He sang of lives lived madly through,
From pampering arms to godless grave.

Of beauty, sweetest boon of earth,
The heart's intoxicating wine :
And those who, drunk, in maddening mirth
Had cursed the idol and the shrine.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

Of wealth that buys the best and worst :
Of licensed shams that idiots daze ;
Of practice sharp and bubbles burst ;
Of scandal which should none amaze.

And then, as tho' the scheme were new,
The world he portioned into schools :
The millions which sustain the few,
The knaves and their succumbent fools.

But when, with bitterness refined,
He hinted, rather than averred,
That to the keen experienced mind,
Our love was folly, faith absurd,

I sickened at the scheme he wove,
Half truth, half lie, the whole unjust
Where every instance went to prove
God's image rather dirt than dust.

The Afterglow :

CXLVIII.

A RACE AGAINST CUPID.

I may not ever hope to shine
As what is termed a deep divine ;
For let me own the fact at once true,
I find the Fathers hard to construe.
Far worse than Ovid or Longinus
Are Chrysostom and old Aquinas.
But in one point I will not yield
To any pastor in the field ;
To wit, the power of my theology
In keeping out the old mythology.
Twould make sad Hesiod simply furious
To hear my strictures on Mercurius ;
Payne Knight would start and burst his coffin
To find me at his heroes scoffing.
How have I lashed the crack-brain Pallas,
Consigned Apollo to the gallows,
Proved Juno quean beyond all cure,
And Venus far too bad for Clewer :
To smiting Mars I gave no quarter,
And Bacchus doomed to salt and water.

Where'er my ministrations tend,
From Burnham Oak to Carter End,
From Ranger's lodge to Grinder's mill,
Round by the Warren if you will,

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

There's not a soul, man, maid, or mother
Knows now one goddess from another.
To them the Muse suggests no cares
Beyond the horses and the hares ;
Their Hippocrene is well-earned beer,
They never heard of old Lempriere,
Nor, filled with bacon and molasses,
E'er dreamed of Pindus or Parnassus.
So far, so good—complete success !
My heart rejoiced—it could no less.
Now comes the grief to dash the glory
Of driving heathen gods before ye.

Amongst that crew of vaunting braves,
Of splendid huzzies, royal knaves,
Their peacocks, lions, snakes, and colts,
Their tridents, cars, and thunderbolts,
Was one, whose name I never booked,
In fact, the imp was overlooked ;
So small, ubiquitous, and young,
He mingled with the childish throng,
Concealed his wings beneath a jacket,
His bow and arrows on a bracket ;
Or whirled away mid clouds and flowers,
Defied inquisitorial powers.
I own myself purblind and stupid,
You guess the chit to be Dan Cupid.
So tiny, nimble, light, and sly,
He'll lurk within a mouldwarp's eye ;

The Afterglow :

Sleep in a dimple for a while,
Wake at a breath, a sigh, a smile ;
Always some mess or mischief brewing,
While elders wonder what's adoing.

Well, how deplorable my state
I trust you will appreciate,
When I confess, that after all
My learned pains, this viper small,
Not satisfied with pranks and guiles
By cottage doors and meadow stiles,
(To keep his practice out of sight,
Awed by my magisterial might,)
Presumed, the graceless runagate,
My very house to penetrate.
How he got there let Myra say,—
I saw him like a gleaming ray,
Perched upon Myra's sleeve, I saw him.
"Twas vain, I found, to overawe him !
Once there, a sovereign on his throne,
He was as firm as Bowder stone.

Now farewell peace to mine and me !
I knew the creature's tyranny ;
And how his universal sway
All, all are driven to obey.
Especially his rage extends
To reverend guardians and old friends ;
Prim maiden aunts he leads wild dances,
Staid cousins treats like circumstances,

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

Applying them to all his turns,
Without one care for their concerns :
Impressing horses, servants, time,
Without a reason or a rhyme,
But just to gratify a whim,
To please enamoured her or him.
But most on messages he doats,
For ever sending flowers and notes,
Fuchsia, or violet, or geranium,
To grace a button-hole or cranium.
As for the letter-post,—the world
Would seem on brink of being hurled
Back into Chaos, such confusion
Follows the post-bag's distribution ;
Such rampant greediness for letters
The sprite implants in his abettors.

One morning, foe to expectation,
No letters brought, but much vexation ;
The mid-day post might make all clear,
But not a carrier passes here.
Quick, let a messenger be found !
One might as well live underground.
As in these hermit hamlet nooks,
Fit homes for jackdaws, cows, and rooks.

The missive would be cheap for gold !
But not a servant must be told ;
The slightest hint excites their fancy,
William can read, and so can Nancy.

The Afterglow:

Some one must venture of us three,
Myra, or madam, or poor me !
This letter should be worth a million,
To make the pastor turn postilion !
And so it seemed—no fraction less,
And I'm packed off, pell-mell, express,—
Tho' hot enough one's brains to addle,
No rest till I am in the saddle.

My Brutus is a nag of strength,
With pasterns just one inch in length ;
His hairy legs so stark and stable,
Would prop the Lord Mayor's dining table.
In length of head he yields to no man ;
His ears are short, his nose is Roman ;
His trot abrupt and perpendicular
Jars every member in particular ;
And for a gallop or a course,
I'd sooner ride the Trojan horse !

The roads like peppered iron lay ;
No rain had washed them many a day,
The sun hung blazing overhead,
The noontide breezes all were dead,
Save one, between a blight and gust,
Which filled the eyes with burning dust.
No matter weather, state, or steed,
Ride off I must—'tis so decreed.
No help around, no help above,
E'en Madam takes the part of Love :

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

Out of the yard they fairly hoot us,
And shut the gate on me and Brutus.

No lingering to walk or talk.
We pound o'er gravel, flint, and chalk,
Right down the vale, across the bridge,
We thread the lanes and pass the ridge ;
My trousers, scarce below the knees,
Expose my shinbones to the breeze,
My flapping hat slides o'er my face ;
Gilpin I feel, without his pace.
Now gained the town, and well within it.
The office opens in a minute ;
A moment more I clutch the letter,
And start again for worse for better.

Thunders my Brutus stiff and steady,
Passes Sir Philip and his lady,
And indefatigably clatters on.
Without a bow I pass Miss Matterson.
Nothing, she'll say, but death or arson
Can make so unpolite a parson !
At length 'tis done ; and home is reached,
With smoking foam my pony bleached ;
I rush to seek the ladies twain
And yield the fruits of all my pain.
" Here are your letters—good and true—
All you expected—one and two ! ”
But not a sound, no answers come.
Have they eloped ? or are they dumb ?

The Afterglow :

From room to room I quickly pass'd
And found them closeted at last ;
An open note before their eyes.
My steps they scarcely recognize,
For in my absence all they sought
Had by a livelier hand been brought.
The lover by a shorter way
Had told them all there was to say,
And so my labours, sad and true it is,
Were but inflicted superfluities.

Well, after luncheon, due reflection
Exposed my want of circumspection ;
For whilst I, churning limbs and brains,
Threaded the net of rounding lanes,
Love, taking all the merit from one,
Had flown across the neighbouring common.
Unwitting matched 'gainst Love and Time,
I lost the race, and pay this rhyme.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

CXLIX.

BEGGARS' SONG.

Here's a health to vagabonds all !

With wallets and rags and staves,
Who wander at will from hostel to hall.

Better be beggars than slaves !

For your beggar he works a double good,
As he pouches your money and swallows your
food.

Sing wallets and rags and staves !
He fills his body and bag, you see,
And makes you exercise charity.

Oh better be beggars than slaves !

We are true pilgrims, if you please ;

With our wallets and rags and staves :
Never have we two coats apiece.

Better be beggars than slaves !
Work we will not and may not steal :
But we harbour no spite nor party zeal.

Sing wallets and rags and staves.
For we bless all givers, come who may,
Fifty and five on a summer's day.

Oh better be beggars than slaves !

The Afterglow :

CL.

SONG.

“ NON OMNIA POSSUMUS OMNES.”

Choosing a book to put little boys on,
Sic dicunt philosophi,
Choose one which proves all meats are poison,
Sic dicunt philosophi ;
But I fancy much that is wholesome is sweet,
At non philosophus ego,
And that all may thrive if they be discreet,
Tho' one man's poison's another man's meat.
At non philosophus ego.

Behemoths crowd every drop of fluid,
Sic dicunt philosophi,
Hungry and huge as a burly Druid,
Sic dicunt philosophi ;
While *I* see a diamond in every drop,
At non philosophus ego.
Oh, Dollond, henceforth I renounce your shop,
And never will peep thro' a microscope :
At non philosophus ego.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

Man was created for learning and cramming,
 Sic dicunt philosophi,
Each atom and instance he ought to examine,
 Sic dicunt philosophi ;
But I think for us all, this can't hold true,
 At non philosophus ego,
And that many have something else to do
While they love and pray, and bake and brew,
 At non philosophus ego.

CLI.

ELFIN OBJURGATION.

To the Writer of a newspaper article, headed “An Extinguisher for Jack o’Lantern.”

“The lissom elves in the midnight fen
Disport themselves like merrie men ;
 All round in a ring they dance and sing
And crown old Jack o’Lantern king.”

What ! Ignis fatuus all a dream ?
 No Jack with his lantern dancing ?
Now out upon all your science and steam,
 Such heterodoxy advancing !

No Will-o’-the-wisp on the damp night air
 Of the lonely marshy hollow,
All ready to lead you heaven knows where,
 If you had but the heart to follow ?

The Afterglow:

Why ! you must be cracked from heel to snout,
Dilapidated Quixote !
To think thus to snuff our old lights out
With your dull blunt ipse dixit.

Such lights to Kraken and Sphynx belong,
All that sets the world divining,
Thro' travellers' say and poets' song,
With their grand mysterious shining,

You rob our fancy, you rob our right,
Your proofs are not worth a straw, sir ;
I dare you produce them at dead of night
To the ghost of old Geoffrey Chaucer.

Your vile innuendoes have clearly shown
How truth may be distorted,
Had the seers been tipsy, for every one
Two lights had been reported.

Go to, thou nibbler of bad pens,
Upstart in your fowzy attic,
Who knowest no more of marshes and fens
Than we of the hot Carnatic.

Eat your words,—drink your ink,—and your
follies atone—
For this is our elfin fiat :
That you give up this foolish will of your own
And leave Will-o'-the-wisp in quiet.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

Or, out of this planet you tramp and trapse.
A grace from the elves you shan't earn ;
The world will be quit of a Jackanapes,
And we'll dance round our Jack o'Lantern.

CLII.

PUCK.

Once upon that golden shallow,
There beneath the bending sallow,
Once I saw a thing of mirth,
Fairy half, and half of earth.
Puck it was, with pointed ear,
And a green rush for a spear,
How he rode the water vole
Spite of plunge and caracole,
How he speared the countless gliders,
Beetles, minnows, glancing spiders,—
How he shot across the pond,
Swaying his long-tufted wand ;—
How he laughed and shrieked outright
At new schemes of elfin spite ;—
How he ducked and skimmed and swam
Up to yonder trickling dam ;—

The Afterglow :

How a weltering carp he chased,
How a shoal of roaches raced ;
How he helmed his head on high
With a bright-winged dragonfly,—
How, aweary of his play,
He flung his broken spear away,
And made Pan's pipes of his fingers,
Playing while the sunset lingers
Such minute melodious airs
As might set dancing all men's cares,
And make their very tears to be
Bubbling dews of fantasy,—
You may picture, if you will,
For to sing I lack the skill.
But soon the sun withdrew his crown,
And all was shadowy grey and brown.
The music ceased—the pool was bare—
And Puck—oh ! was he ever there ?

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

CLIII.

THE HAMADR YAD.

Would you know what fortune I had
Lingering in the Highpath wood?
Lo ! a wondrous Hamadryad
On the tangled pathway stood.

Just as we have heard by olden
Sweet Ionian poets sung,
With a wreath of sere and golden
Rustling oak leaves o'er her flung.

Down I sank in swift confusion,
Fearful that her finer sense
Might, resenting the intrusion,
Scorn my human insolence.

Mute she stood in sad reflection,
With her hands clasped o'er her breast,
Living statue of dejection,
By the warm wood lights caress'd.

How I strained me to behold her !
But her face was turned aside,
Bending o'er her gleaming shoulder
Like a lily's broken pride.

The Afterglow:

Soon thro' all the undergrowing
 Ash and hazel swept her sighs,
Ever mingled with the flowing
 Of such wailing melodies

As the lute's, in casement lying,
 From whose heart the night winds press
Vague notes, sinking, swelling, dying,—
 Artless music of distress.

Then she fell like summer lightning,
 Flashing all along the ground,
Where an antlered oak lay whitening,
 Purple harebells all around.

Liberal spring-tides many a hundred,
 Had matured its prostrate bole ;
“ Can that fairy thing,” I wondered,
 “ Be the old oak’s flitting soul ? ”

Then I marked one pale leaf flutter
 Near her cheek, as close she lay ;
Much she seemed to moan and mutter
 O'er its slender trembling spray.

With its breath a zephyr flying
 Whirled the leaf to me alone,
Hush'd was all the tuneful sighing,
 And the Hamadryad gone.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

Vainly for the silvery gleaming,
Vainly all around I sought ;
Was I waking—was I dreaming—
Was that lustrous being nought ?

Then I placed the leaf with pity
On my tablet's whitest page,
Crooning this memorial ditty
In my homeward pilgrimage.

Stranger still the fortune I had,
Dear my friends, draw nigh and look,
See the wondrous Hamadryad
Clear impressed within the book.

All within the leaf I cherish,
See her beauty bright and rare,
Only with the leaf to perish
Sleeps her image ever there.

The Afterglow :

CLIV.

TO THE SEA.

A SUFFOLK PASTORAL.

TAKE the dogs and the ass ; let us ride and tie.

 'Tis a bright delectable notion,
Over less than a league with this summer sky
 To visit the grand old ocean.

Thro' lanes all lustrous with woodbine and rose.
 By poppy-painted furrows,
By the lone farm house where the brooklet flows.
 And the down where the rabbit burrows.

Oh, wild wide flats ! only ploughed by the wind,
 Where we leave the last of the willows,
Where the bird-boy's call floats faintly behind
 As we catch the chaunt of the billows.

Then we follow the dyke's long dreary stream,
 Which reflects the grey marsh-mallows ;
While plovers around us shriek and gleam,
 And the heron afar in the shallows

Wan as the ghost of a bird of old,
 Heeds not the fierce free horses,
Nor cattle, nor colts with their coats of gold,
 As they snort by the water courses.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

Now we tread the sea hollies and low sand heaps.

While the keen salt air inspiring,
Spurs up the heart till it swells and leaps
At the goal of its glad desiring.

For here, by the ridges barred till now,
With its measured musical crashing
Laughs up in our eyes the blue sea's brow,
Neath the white-footed breezes flashing.

So down we sink in the tufted grass,
And gaze, and listen, and ponder—
On the infinite life of the surging glass,
And the shadowy ships that wander

To and fro, far away, with their freight of souls,
The yellow horizon fretting ;
And the myriad tints which the tide unrolls :
And the sun in his rising and setting.

So the day and the air, and the scent and the hues,
And the ease of the limbs reposing,
The balm of an exquisite peace infuse,
All wounds of the spirit foreclosing.

Oh, harmony, fairest of sea and sky !
Oh, Nature, divine physician !
Who canst lull our sorrows before they die
With the wine of a lovely vision.

The Afterglow :

Drink deep, oh heart, with a thankful grace,
For the draught is heaven's revealing,
To shorten the anguish of after days,
Till comes the perfect healing !

CLV.

ANTHONY.

A NORTHAMPTONSHIRE PASTORAL.

You all knew Anthony, a genuine man,
And quiet in the saddle as a mouse,
Yet strong as horse, and as a lion brave.
With hand as fine as lady's, and an eye !—
To see the old one, like a grey polled hawk,
Swoop down upon the brook, then soar again,
Straight onward still, and clearing all he met !

No better course for youth or stranger here
Than, ere the fox had broken copse or gorse.
To hold by Anthony : his start was sure.
He marked the wind ; he knew the runs and
earths,
And all that sways the instinct of the beast.

It was a sight to see him hold his own
Among the lords and dukes who hundreds spent

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

To ride no forwarder. I mind me once—
"Tis many years ago—of a brown nag,
But five times five in sovereigns he cost,
In Ireland bred, just landed, scarce fifteen,
And rising five ; a pony, babe in short ;
He bought it of his parson cousin, Will ;
He from a dealer fourteen days before.

"Twas with the baron somewhere down in Bucks,
Old Anthony was staying with a friend,
And on his Irish hackney joined the meet,
To see the calf leap from its lair on wheels :
Leap—you might call it many miles of leaps !
River, ox fence, and rasper, plough, high road.
Each and again : all one to hunted deer.
For four long hours almost unchecked they ran ;
How any nag could live across that line,
Deep in the soil, and deeper for the thaw,
I know not : nor did they, who floundering on,
Shut up by dozens, tailing o'er the fields.
Some nine or ten the lighter uplands gained ;
But where Northamptonshire its forest flats
By noble Ashby spreads, there only three
Survived the heavy day and choking pace.
These, the brave buck in sight, like rolling ships
Thro' the deep ridings, stile deep, ploughed on.

The baron and the baron's friend were there,
And Anthony not last. The weary game
Was won at length within the usual pool.

The Afterglow :

And so the trio, all dismounting, stood,
Proud of the day, nor thought of distant homes.
" Well," said the baron's friend to Anthony,
" Your Irish knave has proved himself a trump ;
Wilt part with him ? " And Anthony, not slow,
Struck hands upon the spot, and both were pleased.
He with his hundred guineas, and the friend
With Paddy, whom he henceforth called the Stag.

We all liked Anthony ; yet, ere he died,
He changed his mode of going : short and sharp,
A twenty minutes' scurry all his care,
In the first flight of course, and then for home.

He had a heart, had Anthony—the mist
From his wife's grave still hung about his eyes
All his last years. 'Twas in midsummer time,
In the green arbour facing the low west,
Where the church tower, with quiet grey above
The crowd of corn stacks gave the eye repose ;
'Twas there we sat, post-prandial, as they say.

The facts of Longlease Farm we had discussed,
With all its ins and outs, and pros and cons,
Between the artful tenant and the duke.
We scanned the sale, appraising every lot,
And marvelled at the fancy prices, most
At the five hundred guineas for the calf.
We touched on many matters,—guano, steam,

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

His patent roller, oilcakes, and the Pope,
Who, as the papers told, had fled from Rome.—
And wondered what the end of all would be.

Of course we spoke of hunting and the field,
So changed from our young days: when Anthony,
Whose talk had dwindled into vacant ayes,
And wandering echoes of my own, out broke
As from his thoughts abruptly with a sigh,
And said, “You scarce remember Rufus, Abraham !

”Tis forty years ago : my eldest boy
Was born with Rufus, on the self-same day ;
We had a girl, Janet, a six-year old,
A wonder at her books !—all now are gone !
She named him Rufus : chesnut with white face,
Leggy and large of bone, by Rantipole,
Bred from a little short-legged, rat-tailed mare,
We called the Queen of Roses,—who knows why?
Now Janet petted Rufus, loved to hear
My praises of the colt, and when well pleased.
As time went on after some long fast day,
I said, the good ones do not always wear
Their worth outside. That horse, tho’ long of
limb,
Had bottom like the sea ; only, you mark,
And hold him by the head, he’d fling the mire
From the deep fallows like a colt at play,
With thirteen stone outside, nor puff at last.

The Afterglow :

“ But Janet, my poor Janet, sank, you know.
Down in her one-and-twenty, and that day
The horse at exercise took fright and ran,
And broke his neck against the stable wall.

“ When years had past, and my boy’s funeral,
Preceding his poor mother’s by twelve months.
Closed up our house, I in his private desk,
Among a batch of school-boy papers, found
These lines, which bear the date of Janet’s death.
Of such I am no judge ; but cousin Will
Read them, and nodded, finding fault as wont,
But owned them pretty—pretty for a boy.
I am no judge, but still they seem to touch
Something about my heart, and bring again
Old times without their bitterness, for now
I know they are at rest, aye, all at rest,
And all together there ; but he, poor boy,
He never cared for sport, nor would have made
A horseman had he lived a hundred years.”

This said with trembling voice, yet strangely
clear,
He read, or seemed to read, all in the dusk,
As tho’ he chimed these verses from his breast.

“ Strew, wintry winds, the baleful cypress strew !
Rufus is dead, and she who named him too !
What boots a horse, when for a span of gold
Best nerves and sinews may be bought and sold ?

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

But Janet Rufus loved, the noble beast !
Named him, caressed him, brought him many a
feast.
The neck she stroked, the head she loved to
praise,
We loved them for her love ; oh, sunny days !
Strew, strew, ye wintry winds, the cypress
strew !
Rufus is dead, and she who loved him too !
“ Oh, home of happy hearts for many years !
Garden of sorrow now, and house of tears ;
How gay in light and song were these low rooms.
Where love and beauty seemed perennial blooms.
Thy light is underground, thy flower a stone,
Thy singing bird for ever, ever gone.
Gone with the ringing laugh, which woke the
house to play ;
Gone with the sunny eyes which made December
May ;
Gone with the open hand so tender to caress ;
Gone with the heart that sought God’s meanest
things to bless.
Strew, wintry, wintry winds, the cypress strew !
Rufus is dead, and she who loved him too !
“ Sullen and voiceless the November morn
Hears through its chilly fog the piercing horn :
But father hears it not, tho’ loud the cry
And thunder of the riders tearing by,

The Afterglow :

As from the wooded hill the hunters' throng
Beneath the curtained window pours along.
Father, whom none their leader scorn to call ;
Father, in every run the first of all ;
He hears them as he paces to and fro,
And the glad clamour brings him deeper woe.
Strew, oh ye wintry winds, the cypress strew !
Rufus is dead, and she who named him too !

“ And dearest mother, true as light and air,
The early meal forethoughtful to prepare,
Sits mute and helpless by the crackling flame,
Nor heeds the urn, nor listens to her name ;
Only when Fido creeps caressing near,
She pats his neck, and faster falls the tear,
For lo ! her gentle hand encounters there
Janet’s wrought collar in the silky hair.

Strew, wintry, wintry winds, the cypress strew !
Rufus is dead, and she who named him too !

“ And one there is in sorrow deeper still,
My would-be brother, Robert of the Gill ;
How have I seen him with delighted face
When Janet spoke of Rufus and his pace,
Turn to the father with triumphant cry,
‘ Our Janet knows a horse as well as I.’
Oh, long betrothed ! oh, loving to the last !
When all delays were numbered with the past,

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

Ere on thy heart that sweetest rose could bloom,
Her bridal bed was furnished in the tomb !
Strew, all ye wintry winds, the cypress strew !
Rufus is dead, and she who loved him too ! ”

He folding fast the paper, rose, and I
Grasped both his hands, scarce knowing, without
words,

While the clock gave its ten reluctant strokes.

“ Good-night, and thank you much,” was all he
said,

But came and saw me tighten girths and mount.
Then I, as in a dream, my weed relit ;
This with the moonbeam twined its lingering
smoke,

While slowly I rode up the whitened way.

The Afterglow :

CLVI.

A HERTFORDSHIRE PASTORAL.

RICH was our morn upon the grassy gold
Wherein the shadowing afternoontides trace
High-rounding pediment and gabled face,
And fretted chimnies of that mansion old ;
Glistened each hoary brick and coping dun,
And coigned tower against the genial sun.

The moods and arts of mingled ages lent
Their work to charm us ; skilful modern ease
Basking on terrace lengths 'mid flowers and
trees,
By jealous walls untrammelled, gaily blent
With old times' stateliness ; while all the
ground
In grace of tended Nature smiled around.

We, lounging, paused beneath the sycamore,
A labyrinth of branches overhead,
Which from low clustering columns widely
spread,
Shook out the summer's green and golden store.
Coëvai with the house the tree, they say ;
Ah ! what might those dumb trunks and walls
bewray

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

Made vocal? Now our host in rustic rhymes
 Chaunted the ancient legend of the Cell,
 The tree, the haunted and mysterious well,
With treasure yet untrove ; adding, at times,
 Since sacrilegious outrage here hath been,
 How an unquiet spirit might be seen

Gliding o'er lawn and terrace, pale, alone,
 Not shunning noon, and sadly oft reclined
 Beneath this spreading tree ; the summer wind
Assented, it might seem with plaintive moan ;
 Then silence filled the sunshine, and we crost
 Within the gate, still listening to our host.

Yes, here did pious women cloistered dwell,
 And dried with fasts their tender lives away,
 Beneath St. Benedict's ascetic sway ;
Yes, here gloomed many a penitential cell,
 Where now the sunlit turret's busy vane
 Glitters its windy tidings to the plain.

Next frowned an age distraught with woes and
 fears ;
Stern Reformation's bloodhounds wrath and
 greed,
 Let loose upon the weak to spoil and feed,
Sullied a holy cause 'mid woman's tears.
 So past to reckless hands this shrine profaned ;
 But scanty blessings with the walls remained.

The Afterglow :

For then, 'tis said, a wanton wild and bold
Rode hence alone, and all in armour dight.
Kept with a paramour at dead of night
Her fearful tryst on Dunstable's dark wold,
Urging to rapine his marauding train ;
Yet ere the sunrise reached her bower again.

Sure as the grooms at morn her palfrey found
Hot, spurred, and mire-stained, quivering in
its stall,
They deemed it hag-ridden ; and one and all
Shook their scared heads, perplexed, and mut-
tering frowned ;
They dreamed not of their lady grand and fair,
They knew not of the secret turret stair.

But retribution came, and morn revealed
Night's secret, for the lady pierced and torn,
All blanched in ghastly death, was found for-
lorn
Upon the hidden threshold now unsealed.
A curse was on the spot,—the shuddering heirs
Walled up in horror those polluted stairs.

And still a shadow swayeth black and high,
Where the old ivy all its muffling screen
Thickens and swells as tho' to mask the scene
From honest daylight's broad, benignant eye ;—
Still, 'mid low sighs at nightfall murmur there
Voices alternating a curse and prayer.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

Such dreams hath fancy, twining for her brow
From many a haunted twilight of the past,
Mandrake and vervain, till the heart o'ercast
In its own shadow abject droops ; e'en now,
See there, by yonder vase, a spirit stand,
Dark-haired, white-stoled ; it waves a filmy
hand.

Spirit, in truth—upon the flowery fall
Of those old terraces in summer light,
No flower so fair as she in radiant white,
Amid the crimsons of her floating shawl ;
So said her husband's guests, my wife and I.
As the young hostess of the Cell drew nigh.

“ Welcome, oh blooming ghost ! ” our common
cry :
“ I come,” quoth she, “ the spirit of good
cheer,
Proclaiming that the midday meal is near,
Reminding that the sun is fierce and high.”
Forthwith our host conducting Hermes
played,
And led us to the hospitable shade.

THE BITTERN.

WHEN the April day is dying,
Pale beneath the rain-clouds lying,
Then we thread the blackening trees,
Then we pace the low dank leas,

If ere nightfall deeply glooming,
We could hear the bittern booming,
Booming o'er the wan wide mere.

Now along the misty edges
Sink and sigh the dreary sedges,
And the wild-fowl flash and fly
Black as ravens in the sky ;
Hark ! as night falls deeper glooming,
Hark ! we hear the bittern booming,
Booming o'er the wan wide mere.

Tho' his booming fill the breeze,
No one e'er the bittern sees ;
Only when the winds are moaning,
And the hoary willows groaning,
As the night falls deeper glooming,
Then we hear the bittern booming,
Booming o'er the wan wide mere.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

Whilst we wonder, whilst we hearken,
Lo ! the welkin doubly darken :
Home we turn, our task is done,
And a gift our hearts have won.

For we heard the bittern booming,
As the night fell deeply glooming,
Booming o'er the wan wide mere.

CLVIII.

THE OWL.

A rare night fowl is the great white owl,
Who cowereth close all day ;
But hoots his tune to the stars and the moon,
And the mist of the twilight grey.

It makes us creep to see him sweep
Like a ghostly cherubim ;
Oh, such is shown on the carved gravestone :
Winged head and never a limb.

He'll crouch for an hour on the bleak old tower
And twit the bells so dumb,
With their black mouths wide and tongues fast-
tied,
Till clerk and sexton come.

The Afterglow:

And many a time on the long armed lime
Which smites my window-pane,
In the cold blue night when the dews are white,
I hear his wild refrain.

He has held a carouse on the plump barn mouse.
And the soul in his crop swells high,
So he purrs to the stars of his loves and his wars.
And glares with his yellow eye.

But the maids declare 'tis a spirit there
A-calling the soul away ;
When the yard dog howls to the cry of the owls,
Oh, then it is best to pray.

THE SWALLOW.

Every poet singeth
Sweetest strain he knows
 To the bird that bringeth
 Back the summer rose ;
His heart's bell he ringeth, his best song he
singeth,
 To the bird that bringeth
 Back the summer rose.
Swallow, swallow, welcome swallow,
Veering over holt and hollow.

Rising, floating, wheeling,
Thro' the azure blaze,
 Like a summer feeling
 Flashed from other days ;
Old delights revealing, present sorrows healing,
 Flowery hopes revealing
 Bloom of brighter days ;
Swallow, swallow, welcome swallow,
Circling over holt and hollow.

The Afterglow :

Thee the sufferer, lying,
Never more to rise,
 Blesses in thy flying,
With his fading eyes ;

Tho' his heart be dying, softer is its sighing.

 As he sees thee flying
 Nearer Paradise.

Swallow, swallow, welcome swallow,
Blessing every holt and hollow.

VIOLETS.

Welcome, modest purple faces
In your budding nest,
Smiling up from pleasant places
'Mid the quaintly woven spaces
Of the year's new vest!

Sooth before your beauty charmed me,
Your delicious scent
With the breath of spring had warmed me,
And of half my gloom disarmed me
In the bitter Lent.

So when rude vexations tear us,
Comes the grace of God,
Breathing love for ever near us,
Tho' no earthly help upbear us,
And we kiss the rod.

*TO A WATERFALL ON THE BEACH
AT BONCHURCH, ISLE OF WIGHT.*

From the cliff chasm's mossy night,
Throbbing forth a tongue of light,
Lavishing on roots and stones
Sweet unintermitting tones,
Chime from brook-nymphs' distant urn,
Fingered in the muffling fern,
Courting wintry winds to sing
Preludes for the coming spring,
What so joyous, swift, and bright
As the flash of thy delight ?
Few are they who hear thee calling,
Lonely fountain, ever falling ;
Yet thou sparklest on and on,
Cleaving sand and leaping stone,
To the great deep sea that needs thee not.
To the loud wide sea that heeds thee not.

Yet through all thy fluent gladness
Steals o'er me a whispering sadness ;
For I hear in thy refrain
Some neglected poet's strain,

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

Lone as thou, in heart alone,
All around him ears of stone,
Touching but the echoing air
With his fancies fine and rare,
Twining garlands of sweet breath
Round the marble curls of death ;
Vain the largesses he showers,
Love and Art, and Wisdom's flowers,
On the full gross world that needs them not,
On the cold proud world that heeds them not.

Yet perchance that lonely one
Recks not of those hearts of stone :
Far above them, at the source
Of his inspiration's force ;
All on high his incense flinging.
Joyful in assiduous singing,
Like the lark whose notes are given,
Less, we feel, to earth than heaven.
Wherefore to his soul are lent
Solace, rapture, and content,
And the poet in his dreaming,
Entering into all his seeming,
Is a king, whose golden throne
Fealty owns to God alone,
Tho' the proud cold world may heed him not,
Tho' the full gross world may need him not.

The Afterglow :

CLXII.

MULTITUDE OF POETS.

Since Wordsworth from the mountain sang
A generation lies in clay ;
And singers new from day to day
Throughout the land unceasing clang ;
Nor ever o'er the islands rang
Such peals of many-sounding lay,
Ode, epic, sonnet, and the play
Of lyric light, and tragedy's harangue.

I welcome all ; they make my winter spring,
These ardent songsters, with their chirp and wail.
Some, critic-scared, evanish on the wing ;
Many with stammering twitter gape and fail ;
Wide is the wood of life—let live and sing—
Our jays enhance the thrush and nightingale.

Songs and Sonnets for my Friends.

CLXIII.

EVERY POET'S WISH.

No care too close, no toil too long,
If, ere his voice be hushed on earth,
'Twere his to sing one genuine song,
Should charm the land which gave him birth.

A manly, cordial, loving lay,
Whose tones, with unaffected art,
Through tears or smiles should win their way
To every open English heart.

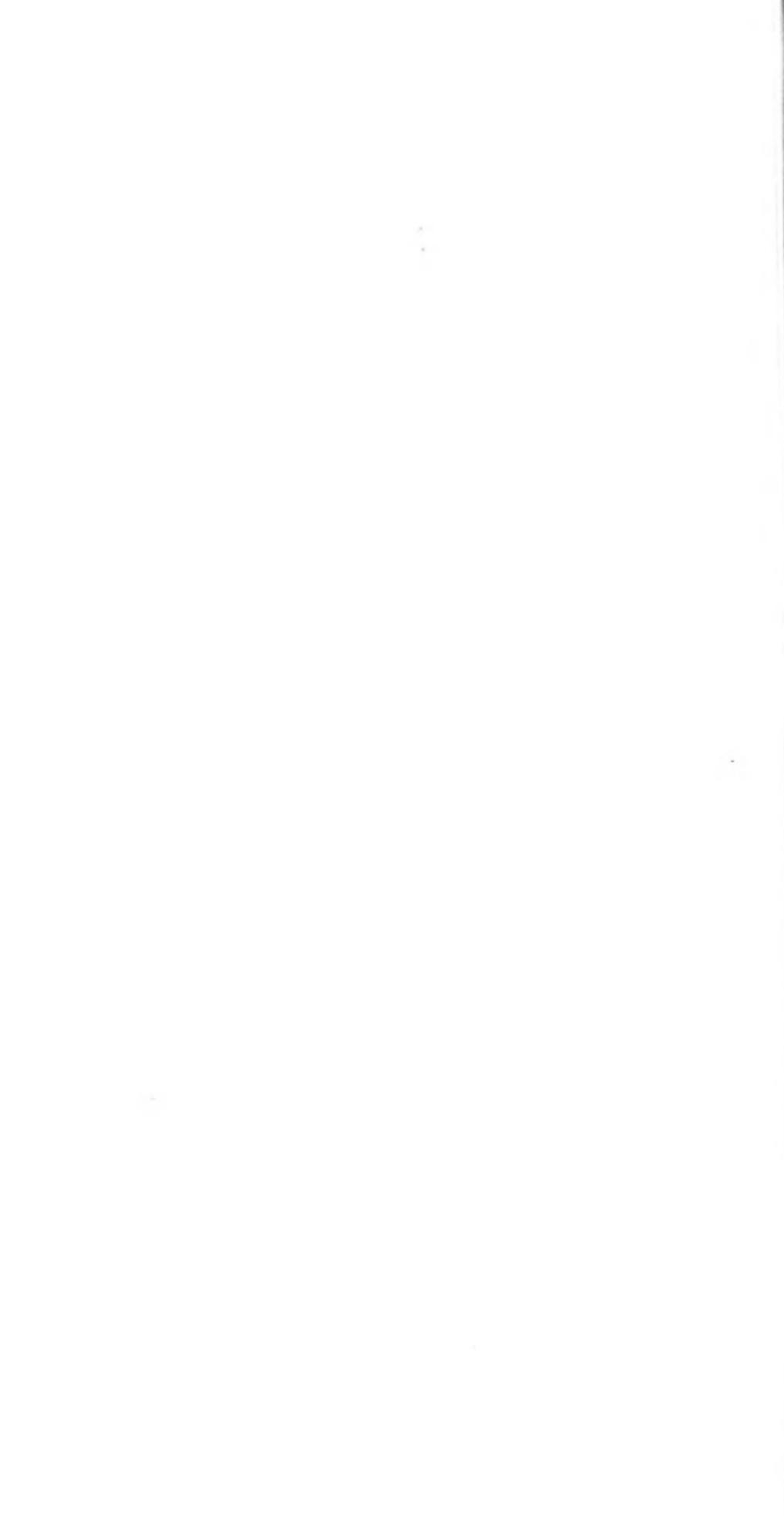
Such as the sage would not disdain,
In hall and bower a joy to some ;
Might soothe the weary workman's pain.
And fill the wanderer's heart with home.

THE END.

LONDON :
PRINTED BY SMITH, ELDER AND CO.,
OLD BAILEY, E.C.



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